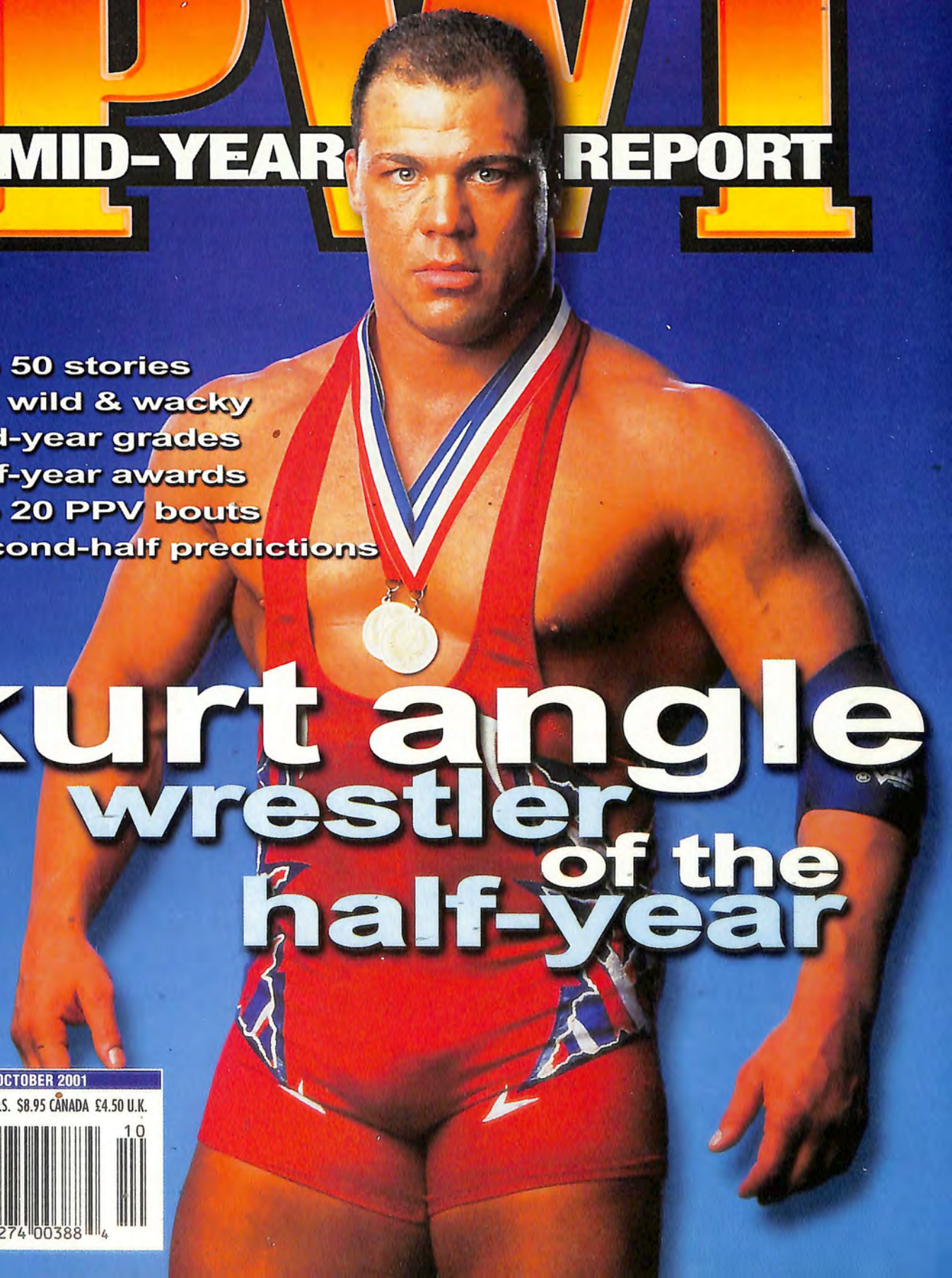
Pro Wrestling Illustrated

Our recap of the first half of 2001!

PWI®

MID-YEAR REPORT

- top 50 stories
- the wild & wacky
- mid-year grades
- half-year awards
- top 20 PPV bouts
- second-half predictions



kurt angle
wrestler of the half-year

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Mid-Year Report
October 2001

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FROM THE DESK OF...

DUSTY RHODES RAN an ad in our magazines years ago for a T-shirt that read "I Can Tell You About Pain."

Every wrestler can. It's their constant companion, their constant foe. The inability to endure pain can reduce a would-be superstar to also-ran status. Contrarily, an unnaturally high threshold for pain can elevate mediocre competitors to seemingly unachievable heights.

"It's something you have to learn to live with," said "Diamond" Dallas Page, "or you'd better find a 9-5 desk job somewhere."

For most wrestlers, pain management is a personal affair, the less talked about the better. All wrestlers suffer; few want to take the risk of being labeled complainers. And none wants to give promoters an excuse not to use him.

"You just work," said DDP, "until you drop."

Athletes will tell you that there is a huge difference between playing in pain and being injured. Hunter Hearst Helmsley was injured when he ripped a tendon in his quadriceps muscle in his tag team match with Steve Austin against Chris Benoit and Chris Jericho on May 21. Though Triple-H gutted out the remainder of the bout, he later had to undergo surgery and was expected to be out of action for at least four months.

Eddie Guerrero wasn't injured in that same sense. He was feeling the cumulative effects of the pounding this sport inflicts on its participants on a regular basis. As tough as he is, Eddie had endured enough. He needed relief. And he found it in the form of doctor-prescribed painkillers. Nothing unusual about that, but his behavior in the locker room prior to the June 4 *Raw* indicated to WWF officials that the medication might be having some adverse effects on his psyche. He was held off the card and told to enter a drug rehabilitation center.

This will be a difficult period for Guerrero, but he should be thankful that the WWF cared enough about him as an individual to insist that he right himself. Too often over the years, wrestling companies have turned a blind eye to wrestlers who were very obviously getting buried by their addictions. Now it's up to the sport to find a way to prevent wrestlers from ever getting to the point at which they become addicted in the first place.

Painkilling drugs serve a vital function, but they cannot be used merely to mask the body's distress call—pain—and make it possible to continue to compete. By the nature of this business, it is not realistic to believe that wrestlers will ever be able to work pain-free. A wrestler, though, must be able to make informed decisions about his condition and feel free to communicate with management when the problems reach a certain level. In team sports, the players often develop relationships with the team trainers, who serve as go-betweens to management. I'm fairly certain that the WWF cares enough about its talent—and cares enough about its investment in that talent—to want to ensure that its wrestlers get the care and treatment they need.

Beyond that, however, there has to be consideration given to the distant futures of today's wrestlers. A recent *Sports Illustrated* article examined the condition of seven typical NFL players as they cope with their physical ailments in retirement. How sad it is to see these once-vital athletes racked with what will be a lifelong of suffering as the result of ignoring the body's screams that it just can't take it anymore.

"I read the article," Page told me. "It's scary, but life is about sacrifice and taking chances. Taking risks are all about measuring danger against return. I get a lot out of this sport, and this sport allows me to give a lot to a lot of people. That makes it worth the risk."

Stu Saks
Publisher

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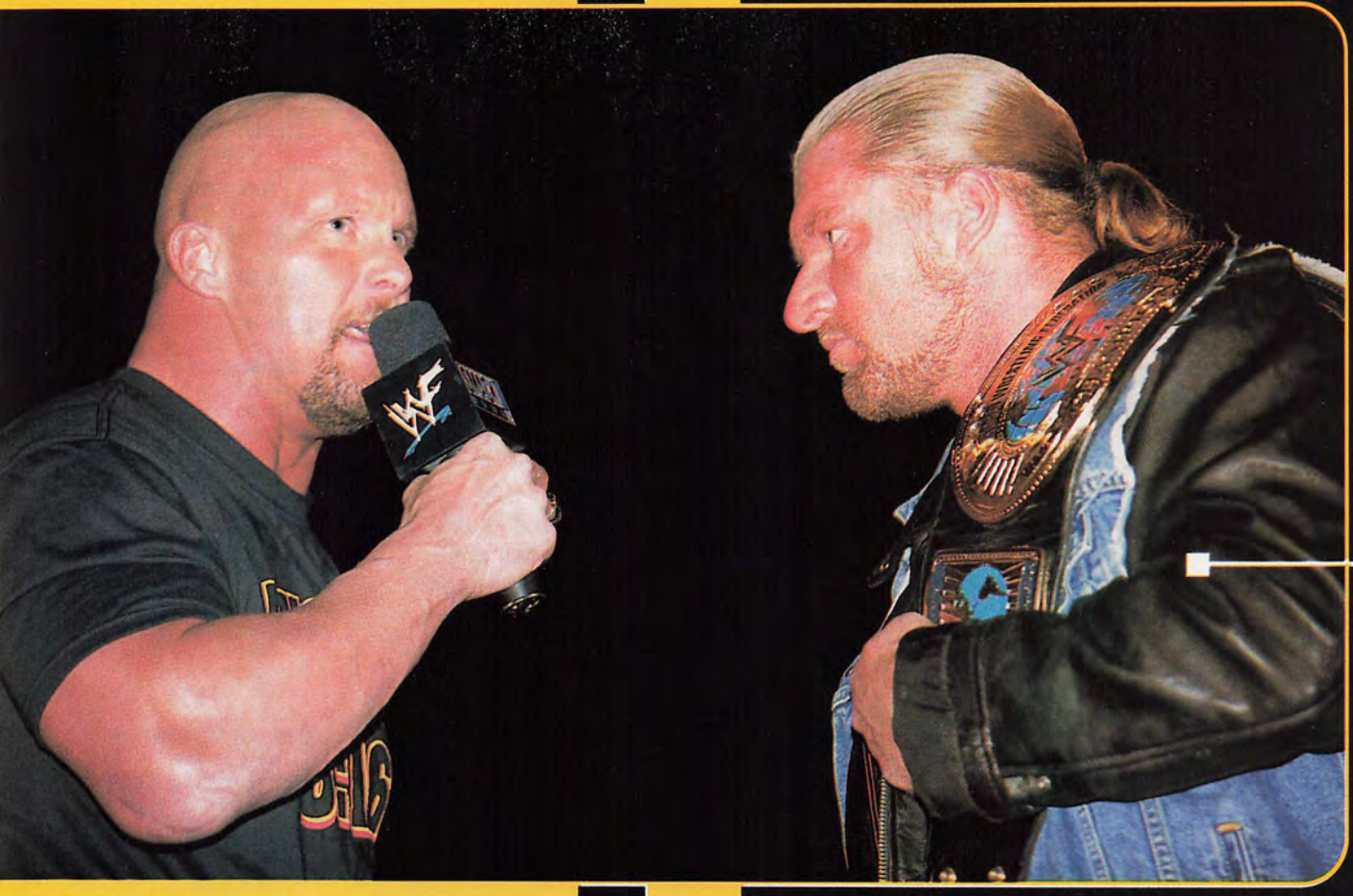

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Compiled by Will Welsh

E-WRESTLING

We know you think you could be a head booker for a wrestling company. We've all fallen under that illusion once or twice. Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker has been trying to get the WWF to use his "sure-fire" storyline to get Big Bossman over for years. Thinking that we could do better than what's fed to us on TV is part of what makes wrestling so much fun. Just like an armchair quarterback thinks he could direct his local NFL team better than the guy on the field, we wrestling fans are also apt to think that when it comes to the sport we love, we're geniuses.

Unfortunately, most of us aren't geniuses. If we all had a talent for writing detailed, sophisticated, and, most important, entertaining storylines, the airwaves would be filled with wrestling shows.

It doesn't hurt to dream, though. It also doesn't hurt to practice. And while hopping in a backyard and bopping your next-door neighbor over the head with a two-by-four might seem like fun to some people, there is a safer outlet for learning how to become the ultimate professional wrestling booker: E-wrestling.

Different people call E-wrestling different things, but it all boils down to one simple idea: A group of like-minded people get together via the Internet and create their own characters, their own titles, and their own federations. Over time, feuds develop and alliances are born. Some of these E-feds, as they're called, are based on characters found in the major federations. Most of them, however, are completely fictional, with bylaws, rules, characters, and storylines created by their members.

"E-wrestling is what I would call Dungeons & Dragons for pro wrestling fans," said 21-year-old Dan Kauffman, who has been E-wrestling for the past six years. "A person, known as a handler, creates a character, determines the character's personality and physical traits, then writes interviews (called roleplays) and participates in matches and storylines with characters created by other handlers. Obviously, there's more depth to the game itself, but those are the simple guidelines."

E-wrestling, however, won't have your family wondering if you're going to the dark side because you have a character named Thargor traipsing around the Vail of Dead Souls looking to add to its numbers. Who knows, if you're lucky, you'll be supported in your E-wrestling exploits. Not everybody decides to sit at a computer for hours a week and write out promos and ideas for intricately weaved storylines.

What? Shocked that there is writing involved? Well, how else are you going to cut promos and issue challenges? Telepathy? And just like in the real federations, the best talkers always seem to get the biggest pushes.

"As we all know, it takes more than just physical talent for a wrestler to succeed," said Kauffman, who competes in the Universal Wrestling Federation, found at uwf-central.com. "You also have to be able to entertain a crowd and make them care about your character. It's the same in E-wrestling. You have to be able to write roleplays and create angles and feuds that the rest of us want to read and follow."

Yes, you'll do a little work, but the hours of fun you'll have doing it is the tradeoff. If you're looking to get started, we suggest heading to your favorite search engine. Once there, type in "E-wrestling," "E-federations," or "fantasy wrestling" and check out the results. Pick a fed you like and try to join. (We say "try to join" because E-fed presidents are picky about the people they let into their promotions.) If you'd really like to get in-depth, try checking out the newsgroup rec.sport.pro-wrestling.fantasy. The people who post here are E-wrestling enthusiasts and will point you in the right direction. Links you might try checking out are www.wrestlecell.com and www.thefansite.efeduniverse.com. With news, opinion columns, and updates from many different E-feds, these two sites offer it all.

SATURDAY NIGHT IN STILLWATER

Kurt Angle came right out and said that nothing compared to what happened to him on the night of June 2, 2001, in the thriving metropolis of Stillwater, Oklahoma.

It was on that night that Angle, with microphone in hand, addressed the many wrestling aficionados who had come to see him and a few other all-time greats from the mat sport.

Waiting for the punchline, aren't you? You're just wondering whether Angle addressed those attendance as yahoos, yokels, or rednecks, aren't you? You're wondering what creative line Angle used to insult the fine people of Oklahoma. Well, keep waiting, because there were no zingers fired off on this night. Not even a single "It's true ... it's *damn* true!"

The Kurt Angle who showed up in Stillwater on June 2 was not Kurt Angle the WWF superstar. It was Kurt Angle the amateur wrestling legend. On that night, the four other all-time greats who shared the stage with Angle were not "Stone-Cold," The Rock, Triple-H, and Chris Jericho. They were Tom Brands (no, not Tom Brandi), Kenny Monday, Alan Rice, and Rick Tucci, and all five were inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.

Angle was legitimately humbled by the experience.

"There are so many memories from amateur wrestling," he said during his acceptance speech. "This is such a tremendous sport that builds so much character ... we need to keep the sport alive and well."

He even paid tribute to amateur wrestling great Dave Schultz, who was murdered several years ago and whose widow, Nancy, was on hand for the festivities. Both were inspirational to him.

"Nancy was there at a time when she should have been selfish ... Dave Schultz was the biggest inspiration in my life, the one that I always looked up to and always wanted to be like," he said.

We have to admit that Angle was more than deserving of the honor. In addition to winning the World Championships and the Olympic gold in Atlanta in '96, he won a Junior Nationals title at Mount Lebanon High School in Pennsylvania, as well as four league championships, three conference championships, and two NCAA titles (plus one runner-up finish) at Clarion University.

Angle's wife, Karen, presented him with a Hall of Fame ring at the ceremonies. A few hours later, of course, it was off to WWF New York for a guest hosting gig on *Sunday Night Heat*. And, of course, he bragged to everyone several times about the honor that had just been bestowed upon him in the way only an obnoxious WWF superstar could.

Is it really any wonder that Angle's biography on www.wrestlinghalloffame.org conveniently left out his pro wrestling accomplishments?

Courtesy of National Wrestling Hall of Fame

THE STUPID FILES

•Believe it or not (we know it's awfully hard to believe), there are wrestling fans out there who scoff at the way we here at *PWI* cover the wrestling industry. If they scoff at us, though, we wonder how they'd react to a recent King of the Ring preview that was presented in Canada's *Feature* magazine. Check this malarkey out (*PWI's* comments are found in italics):

"There will be a new champion crowned at this year's King of the Ring. The eight-man elimination tournament is one of the World Wrestling Federation's most popular pay-per-view shows. Last year, The Rock slammed his way to the title *(Kurt Angle was last year's King of the Ring; Rock has never won it)* with three convincing wins, but you can expect such WWF stalwarts as 'Stone-Cold' Steve Austin, Triple-H, and The Undertaker to play the prominent roles in this year's show, June 24, at East Rutherford, N.J. The Rock? He's a victim of his own popularity. The official word from WWF headquarters in Stamford, CT, is that The Rock, whose real name is Chris Jericho *(Uh, no. As we all know, Rock's real name is Dwayne Johnson)*, has been suspended. The WWF, which surpasses the best soap operas for creating outrageous situations and larger-than-life heroes and cads, has pitted The Rock against WWF boss Vince McMahon. As we all know, the boss isn't always right, but he's always the boss.

But the real reason for The Rock's vacation is that he's taking care of business. Jericho *(substitute Johnson here)* considers himself an entertainer, and he has branched out in recent years. His credits include an autobiography that appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller list and a CD that was less successful *(Rock has never released a solo CD. Neither has Jericho. They must be talking about one of those ever-popular WWF entrance music compilation CDs)*. He has also made his mark in Hollywood with a feature role in *The Mummy 2*, which is expected to be a box office hit this summer.

Jericho *(again, replace with Johnson)* declined an invitation *(when was Rock invited to be a participant?)* to defend his King of the Ring title *(see Kurt Angle notation above)* because he's being paid $45-million (U.S.) *($45-million for one movie? And we thought the $20-million-per-movie club was exclusive!)* for another regal role as The Scorpion King in the film of the same name. The Rock did stick around long enough to make *Break Down The Walls* for the WWF Fanatic series *(Actually, that's Jericho's PPV special)*, available on pay-per-view to Bell Express Vu subscribers."

Now that's wrestling journalism we *all* can make fun of.

•We're tired of Jim Ross. Actually, that's not correct at all. We think Ross does his various jobs in the WWF extremely well. We're just tired of Ross' pandering to fans of cruiserweight and light heavyweight wrestling.

Every week, J.R.'s "Ross Report" comes out on wwf.com. More often then not, Ross makes mention of how he's lobbying WWF officials to emphasize the light heavyweight division and says how successful he thinks the light heavyweight division could become if done right.

Ross' comments would be fine if it the WWF actually had plans for making the division something other than a comic troupe or a fixture on *Sunday Night Heat*. But no matter who the light heavyweight champion is (at press time it was Jeff Hardy), something always goes

awry with the division's push. Former ECW World heavyweight champion Jerry Lynn was supposed to be the division's savior. Then he lost the title to Hardy while barely making any waves. The highlight of Lynn's reign? His promo from WWF New York during the Judgment Day pay-per-view. It was exceptionally done—except for one thing: It aired on pay-per-view and was never followed up on after Judgment Day. Those fans who didn't order the pay-per-view probably didn't even know that Lynn had a segment on the darn thing.

If the WWF doesn't decide to push the light heavyweight division (Hardy winning the title makes you think the higher-ups are at least re-evaluating the situation), it should quiet Ross' almost-weekly commentary on the subject. Right now, he's looking a little too much like the boy who cried wolf.

(continued on page 10)

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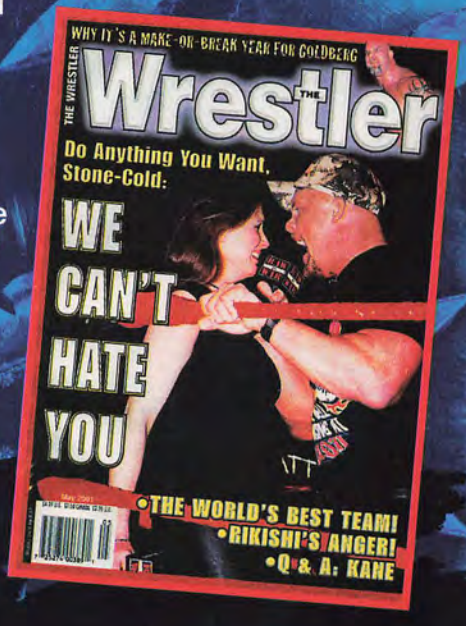

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WE HEARD THAT!

"Don't get lazy and think that just because you have a WWF talent development contract, you can sit back. That contract can be taken away just as quickly as you received it. Remember that many are called, but few are chosen."

—Paul Bearer, reminding all WWF developmental talents that they can be replaced on wwf.com

"It scares me because wrestling is so much of a brotherhood that when WCW and ECW folded, it almost gave a black mark to wrestling—period—and said that we are not hot anymore."

—Jimmy Hart, on wrestlingobserver.com

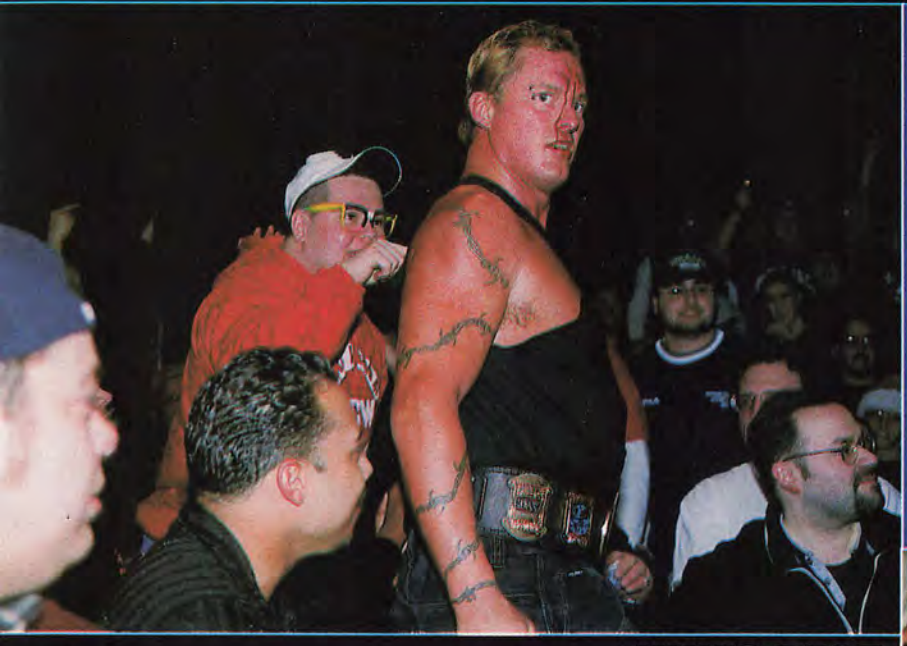
"I've gotten more banged up in the year I've been with the WWF than in all my years in amateur wrestling."

—Kurt Angle, during an interview with *Salt Lake City Weekly*

"Doing high spots is just athletics, it's part of wrestling, but it has very little to do with actually 'working.'"

—Lance Storm, debating what the term "working" really means on his Web site, stormwrestling.com

caption me!



Think you're a better writer than the editors here at *PWI*? Here's your chance to prove it, punk! This picture of a fan's close encounter with The Sandman at the ECW Arena needs a short, concise, and downright uproarious caption. If you think you're up to the task, e-mail your zany quips to PWIFocus@aol.com or throw a 34-cent stamp on an envelope and drive the postal workers of America even closer to the brink by mailing your suggestions to "Caption Me!" Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Three months from now, we'll share with you the best of the bunch—and the funnier the better.

JULY'S BEST

"Not again! Didn't I tell Dustin to stop wearing my clothes?!"
—James Bullock, Richmond, VA

"I smelled what The Rock was cookin'."
—Michael McCurdy, Eureka, CA

Vince McMahon: "Terri, I have an idea. I want you to manage Dustin Rhodes!"
Terri: *"Ahhhhhh!"*
—Anthony Decker, Narrows, KY

"Look, this is my Kathie Lee Gifford impression!"
—Michael Donato, Bohemia, NY

"Oh no … Saturn is back wearing dresses again!"
—Aaron Harwood, Strathoy, Ontario

"Oh boy, that ice cube down my back is *real* cold!"
—Darren Oliver, New Orleans, LA

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WEAR-DOWN HOLDS

1. Airplane spin	21. Face rake	41. Leg lock
2. Arm drag	22. Fireman's carry ram	42. Leg sweep
3. Arm lock	23. Flying body press	43. Manager interference
4. Asian spike	24. Flying clothesline	44. Monkey flip
5. Atomic drop	25. Flying drop kick	45. Overhead toss
6. Bear hug	26. Flying elbow drop	46. Pole ram
7. Bite	27. Flying head butt	47. Reverse chin lock
8. Body slam	28. Flying mare	48. Rolling scissors
9. Body tackle	29. Forearm smash	49. Rope burn
10. Bulldog	30. Foreign object	50. Russian sickle
11. Chicken wing	31. Full nelson	51. Savate kick
12. Choke slam	32. Giant swing	52. Scissors grip
13. Claw	33. Grapevine	53. Shoulder breaker
14. Clothesline	34. Hair pull	54. Slingshot
15. Cross body block	35. Hammer lock	55. Snap mare
16. Double axehandle	36. Head lock	56. Step-over toe hold
17. Drop kick	37. Head stomp	57. Suplex
18. Eagle split	38. Hip roll	58. Surfboard
19. Elbow smash	39. Irish whip	59. Turnbuckle smash
20. Eye gouge	40. Knee drop	60. Wrist lock

SET-UP HOLDS

61. Abdominal stretch	71. Cradle	81. Power bomb
62. Avalanche	72. Crucifix	82. Power slam
63. Backbreaker	73. DDT	83. Scorpion deathlock
64. Backroll press	74. Figure four	84. Sleeper
65. Belly to belly	75. Flying leg drop	85. Slingshot suplex
66. Big splash	76. Gourd buster	86. Spine buster
67. Boston crab	77. Hurricanrana	87. Stunner
68. Brain buster	78. Moonsault	88. Sunset flip
69. Camel clutch	79. Neckbreaker	89. Superplex
70. Cobra clutch	80. Piledriver	90. Texas cloverleaf

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CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE _____

WRESTLER'S NAME (DO NOT USE ANY REAL PRO WRESTLER NAMES) _____

WEAR-DOWN HOLDS: *Choose 10 of the holds at the left numbered 1-60. Only use a hold once.*

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____ 10 _____

SET-UP HOLDS: *Choose 5 of the holds at the left numbered 61-90. Only use a hold once.*

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

FINISHING HOLD: *Create your own custom final maneuver or choose a hold from our list.*

_____

RINGSIDE

With Will Welsh

ON MAY 28, you saw Hart family patriarch **Stu Hart** get honored on *Raw Is War.* What you didn't see was the aftermath of his appearance.

"Tonight was a great night for the family," **Ellie**, one of Stu's daughters, said in a press release sent out by the family. "Burying the hatchet with Vince, having **Chris [Jericho]** pay tribute to **Owen [Hart]** and Stu, for the first time it feels like we can get on with our lives. Bitterness has ripped our family apart the last two years. It's time we get past that and handle the situation like adults."

Like adults? Check out this excerpt from the same release:

"**Bret Hart**, who has had personal animosity for **Vince McMahon** since long before Owen passed away, continues to fight any attempts for reconciliation between the two families. Owen's widow, **Martha**, who openly admits to having strongly disliked wrestling long before Owen's death, has opted to take the same path. However, the vast majority of Stu and **Helen Hart's** extensive family are relieved to be able to close a difficult and bitter chapter in the family's future."

Adults take pot shots at grief-stricken, emotionally frail family members? Not any adults that I know of.

Days before Stu even made his appearance, there were widespread rumors that he was going to appear on *Raw.* Those rumors reached Martha. In response to the rumors, Martha told the *Calgary Sun,* "If anyone from [the Hart family] were to go to the show, it would be disrespectful and disgusting."

It's hard to disagree with her, especially with the way the WWF handled that night's main event. If Vince McMahon truly wanted to honor Stu, the WWF could have done it without re-enacting *yet again* the finish of the infamous Survivor Series '97 main event, in which Vince screwed Bret out of his WWF title by calling for the bell the second **Shawn Michaels** locked on the sharpshooter. This time around, **Steve Austin** played the role of Michaels, and **Chris Benoit** played the role of Bret Hart. The second Austin locked a Crippler crossface on Benoit, McMahon demanded that an official ring the bell—as the Hart family looked on from the front row.

If the Hart family wants to make amends with the WWF, that's all well and good. They're a wrestling family and the WWF is the only big game in town. It only makes sense that **Bruce Hart**, who recently

It was Survivor Series '97 all over again in Calgary back in May. Instead of Shawn Michaels vs. Bret Hart (above left), it was Steve Austin vs. Chris Benoit (above right). The fact that the same finish played out must have further irked members of the Hart family who didn't attend the show.

opened the legendary Stampede Wrestling back up for business, would want to work with the WWF sometime in the future. But that will come at a steep price.

If you're thinking about checking out an independent show in your area, don't be surprised if you see former ECW starlet **Dawn Marie** in action. Though she rarely got in the ring to get physical in ECW (unless she was rolling around the ring with **Francine**), Dawn has been training hard. She's already one of the best-looking valets in wrestling. Now she's working on becoming one of the sport's most dangerous valets.

"**Simon Diamond** has been a great trainer," Dawn told me when I caught her between workouts. "Before I started working toward my goal of becoming a full-fledged wrestler, I knew it was hard work, but I didn't know how hard. I'm currently putting in a lot of eight-hour days on the mat, but that doesn't really bother me. I just wish I had done it sooner."

I recently had a chance to watch Dawn wrestle a match against **Dina Divine**, and I have to say that I was impressed. While she's still a little green in some areas, it's apparent that her in-ring abilities have progressed since her ECW days. Becoming an all-around performer can't hurt her chances of landing a job with the WWF/WCW, either.

Jim Lewis, trial attorney for **Lionel Tate**, is having another day in court with the WWF. This time, however, it's the WWF and not Lewis leveling the accusations. The federation has filed a defamation lawsuit against him.

"All I was doing was defending my client and expressing my opinion, which is my First Amendment right, about a multimillion-dollar corporation," Lewis told the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel.* "And now that multimillion-dollar corporation is coming after me to try to take my kids' college funds."

You'll remember that Lewis argued that Tate killed six-year-old playmate **Tiffany Eunick** while mimicking maneuvers he had seen wrestlers perform on TV. A Florida jury convicted Tate of murder. In interviews, jury members cited the severity of Eunick's numerous injuries as the reason for rejecting the defense's argument. Autopsy results showed that Eunick suffered a severed liver and a fractured skull. Prosecution experts compared her injuries to those suffered in high-speed car collisions.

While the case was ongoing at press time, Lewis lambasted the WWF on several TV shows and even

(Continued on page 78)

Dawn Marie looks great even when she's getting ready to wrestle. Believe it or not, she appears to be on her way to becoming a pretty good competitor. She's putting in a lot of time training with Simon Diamond.

In focus

By Dave Lenker

"HAT GUY! HAT GUY! HAT GUY!"

It's right up there with the strangest chants I've ever heard at a wrestling show. Most of the more creative ones I've heard over the past eight years have come from ECW crowds—and most are too vulgar to print here.

But the chant emanating from a few dozen onlookers at an East Coast Wrestling Association in Wilmington, Delaware, this spring really threw me. Were they really chanting for one of their fellow fans, a guy who wears unusual hats to shows?

Indeed they were.

John "Hat Guy" Bailey had good reason to smile after he made his debut in the ECWA as a referee (right). He did a great job. After following wrestling for 30 years, he finally got his chance at getting involved in a big way (above).

Meet John Bailey, an employee of the U.S. Post Office from suburban Philadelphia. Or, if you were one of the many who didn't miss many ECW shows at the ECW Arena, meet the man you knew as Hat Guy. He's been a wrestling fan for at least 30 of his 37 years on this planet, he estimates. He attended just about every WWF/NWA card in Philly in the 1980s and still goes to the big shows in town. He also takes in about four indy shows in the area per month, including those put on by ECWA promoter Jim Kettner.

If you've never seen Hat Guy in action, you've missed a lot. He's never been shy about telling the wrestlers what he thinks of them (all in good fun) and jawing with them if they step outside the ring and get near him.

Hat Guy was especially rough on referee Larry Peace during one show this spring. Peace made some questionable calls that night and was slowly drifting into heel ref territory. When Peace allowed Simon Diamond to officiate a bout between Dawn Marie (Simon's girlfriend) and Dina Divine, and Simon did a lousy job, well, Hat Guy was not pleased. And he was vocal about not being pleased. Problems between Peace and Paul Turner, another ECWA ref, flared up that night as well, so Kettner signed a match pitting Peace and Diamond against Diamond's arch-rival, Ty Street, and Turner for his next show.

One problem: Who could referee such an unusual match?

Bill Alfonso? Charles Robinson? Earl Hebner? Dick Kroll?

Nope.

Suggestions from the ECWA crowd?

"Hat Guy! Hat Guy!"

"Sure, why not!" Bailey said when Kettner first pulled him aside and suggested the idea to him. And so the deal was done. John Bailey, whose only previous experience in the ring came one night a few years ago when he handled the ring announcing for Dennis Coraluzzo in New Jersey, was going to don a striped shirt. Okay, in his case, a striped hat.

Hat Guy arrived at St. Matthew's Parish Hall in Wilmington at about

2:30 on the day of his refereeing debut, nearly five hours before bell time. He was going to be prepared.

"I was a little nervous," he said, "but the other guys were like, 'Calm down. Everything will be all right.' And it turned out all right. I stopped being nervous as soon as I got out there."

Hat Guy was a huge hit as a referee, both with the vocal crowd and with Kettner, who said he did a terrific job. Of course, there was that little problem he had with Dawn Marie, one of his favorite ladies from ECW. She stole his striped hat at one point and wore it on her head, then got a little too involved for Hat Guy's liking. So what could a hostile Hat Guy do about such a problem? He speared her and rolled around on the mat with her, prompting chants of—now get this—"Hat-fight! Hat-fight!" from the crowd. He didn't even realize that chant had broken out before I mentioned it to him.

"I was oblivious to what people were saying," he said.

And how much fun was that *hat*fight with Dawn?

"I thought if I ever did that, I'd be arrested."

Ah, the beauty of wrestling. In what other business could someone named Hat Guy become a star for a night?

BAD TIMING

I feel sorry for Paul Heyman.

Okay, just give me a chance to explain those six words.

I don't feel too sorry for him because of the demise of ECW. That was a lot of his doing. And it's not like he had to scramble to find a job to pay his bills once ECW was taken off life support. He already had a cushy position with the WWF by the time ECW officially folded. He's the number-one color commentator for the company and an integral part of the creative team.

I just can't help but wonder what Heyman could have done with the ECW talent that defected to the WWF had Fusient's deal to buy WCW gone through.

I wonder if Justin Credible wonders about the same thing. And Jerry Lynn. And Yoshihiro Tajiri. Maybe even Rhyno and Spike Dudley. *Maybe* even Tommy Dreamer and a few ex-ECW stars who haven't even joined the WWF.

The seeds for an ECW invasion were planted. Most of the ex-ECW stars were making debuts via unexpected run-ins. "E-C-W! E-C-W!" chants were being heard at WWF shows. Heyman was still making references to his old company.

Imagine how fantastic Heyman could have been as the leader of the ECW invasion. Perhaps we'd even see the return of Paul E. Dangerously. When the WWF bought WCW, any chances of that happening evaporated. Vince couldn't have ECW and WCW wrestlers "invading" the WWF at the same time. Establishing WCW as a viable separate company was going to be tough enough.

Once he's given a chance to do something besides fetch coffee for William Regal, Yoshihiro Tajiri has a shot at being a star in the WWF. His chances of doing so would have improved had there been an ECW invasion of the WWF.

Adding another faction of wrestlers to the mix would have confused everything.

I suppose the real losers in this are Credible, Lynn, and perhaps Tajiri. Instead of being part of a hot invasion storyline, Credible is buried in X-Factor, Lynn is rarely on TV, and Tajiri is William Regal's errand boy (though I still think he could be a star). Spike is getting a decent push with the other Dudleys and as Molly Holly's suitor. Rhyno is the only one who has a real chance of making it close to main events.

If WCW wrestlers start appearing *regularly* on *Raw* and *Smackdown,* the Credibles, Lynns, and Tajiris will have to work even harder to distinguish themselves. Hey, at this point, what choice do they have but to do so?

(Have a comment or question about "In Focus" or anything else you see in ***PWI?*** *You can contact Dave Lenker via e-mail at PWIFocus@aol.com.)* □

Off the TOP ROPE

By Brandi Mankiewicz

If you wish to contribute to Brandi's mailbag, send your letters to:

TOP ROPE
Box 1148
Ft. Washington, PA 19034

Or send e-mail to:
OffTheTopRope @yahoo.com

(Editor's note: The opinions expressed in this column are those of the letter writers and Brandi Mankiewicz herself. They do not necessarily reflect the editorial views of this magazine.)

OKAY, THE DUST has settled and the WWF is the only group still standing. Scurrying about with the dust bunnies are the independents trying to challenge the almighty Vince. Who will be the first to try to dethrone him? Currently, there's not one promotion capable of doing it. There's talk of Hulk Hogan mustering a legion of wrestlers to battle with Vince, but I don't see it happening ... at least not on the nationwide level that fans expect.

Vince's downfall might not come in the form of competition at all. I think it'll be the ***lack*** *of competition that will ultimately prove that Vince is mortal. Without someone to one-up, there's no reason for him to play. He can just take his ball and go home since there are no kids at the playground that are of his size and strength. He needs that yin to keep his competitive yang going. Now Vince has no one left to bamboozle besides those within his own company. It's open season on those who comprise his naughty list. And that's not a good thing for those who already sweat their jobs.*

Don't worry, I will give you shelter from Vince's wrath. I'll call it my good deed for the decade. Hey, why else am I your champion?

Dear Almighty Queen Brandi,

Your column is my favorite in *PWI* because you tell it like it is, except for your comments about Sting and The Undertaker. Firstly about The Undertaker, he may be a redneck, but he has much more class than you. At least he cares about somebody (Sara), while you are insulting everybody in your path. Anyway, he has been wrestling for 11 years, which is 11 years longer than you. Despite Sting's absences, you should respect him because he a legend and eight-time NWA/WCW champ. Other than that, I love your columns! You should be the editor-in-chief instead of that dummy David Lenker.

JASON BLATT
JBLATTAN@aol.com

Dear Jason,

How can I be your favorite if you don't like what I write? I just print what I believe is true. If it was false, it would be edited out of the column by my proofreader. Just because I think The Underredneck should retire before he ruins a great career by becoming a totally mortal character doesn't mean that I'm an uncaring person. I care about his wicked past and keeping his legacy intact. Sure, I don't get into the ring myself, but besides Kevin Kelly and Tazz, name one WWF broadcaster who has stepped into the ring for more than a novelty match. You don't have to be actively involved in a situation to be an expert on it. If that were the case, Civil War historians wouldn't exist, priests wouldn't do marriage counseling, and journalists wouldn't have a longstanding tradition of reporting on world events. It does help to research a subject to understand it, but you don't have to actually die in order to understand death. Just ask The Undertaker.

Dearest Queen Brandi, Ruler of the Wrestling World,

First of all, I bow down before your redheaded hotness. There, now that that is done, a few questions: What is your take on all the criticism leveled toward Triple-H as of late? The man is a fan-

How many WWF announcers have "won a heavyweight wrestling title" included on their resume? I can name two, but Kevin Kelly is the only one to go from broadcaster to active wrestler. Billy Fives and Rick Fuller know just how great Kevin's wrestling skills are; that's why they're siding with him.

tastic talent who has given back more to wrestling than most champions of recent memory with his work ethic and putting over of so-called mid-carders such as Matt and Jeff Hardy, Kurt Angle, Chris Jericho, Chris Benoit, and even Taka Michinoku. Is this just sour grapes from wrestlers who can't hold a candle to him? Also, am I the only one who finds "Stone-Cold's" heel turn to be the most entertaining character development in the last year? How long do you think this dark side of Austin will last? Or do you think he'll be back to the Austin of old before we know it?

Your thoughts?

Sincerely,
BRIAN WISSINK
brianwissink@home.com

Dear Underling,

While I don't believe you were being totally sincere with your praise, I will still answer your questions. I do agree that wrestlers, fans, and announcers are jealous of Triple-H. He has really blossomed into the prototypical superstar for this new century. He's agile, muscular, and has the rock star quality (and hair) that is so needed to succeed in today's world. On top of that, he has a cunning sense of psychology and can stay several steps ahead of his opponent during a match. Sure, he's on the shelf now, but there's no doubt that he's studying every match of which he can get a videotape or DVD. When Hunter makes it back into the ring, we'll see a Triple-H that will be mentally and physically stronger than before.

As for "Stone-Clod" Steve Austin, I find his latest attempt to be a heel lame at best. "Stone-Clod" rose to superstardom by being a heel and forcing the fans to like it. In the good ol' days, that would have been impossible, but in this warped S & M age, it's become acceptable to cheer the most evil of people. Just look at the first line of your letter for a good example. It just shows that weaker souls are drawn to stronger souls—no matter how evil those souls might be.

Okay now, years ago, when this photo was taken, which one of these great ECW personalities did you think would one day call matches alongside Jim Ross on Monday nights? *Oh my God,* of course it would have been Joey Styles. Heck, it still should be Joey next to Ross.

Dear Brandi,

I am writing because I need to get a couple of things off my chest about this whole WCW purchase. Ever since the WWF bought WCW, WWF programming has been nothing but a letdown. Especially since Jerry "The King" Lawler is no longer in the WWF. No matter how bad the match was, Lawler and Jim Ross could always make it exciting. Now with no Lawler and no competition for the WWF, the programming is already going downhill. I feel that Shane McMahon could make WCW a megabillion-dollar company with Lawler and Joey Styles as the announcers. Wrestlers like Shane Douglas, Tommy Dreamer, Rob Van Dam ... Shane can do so much. On a personal side note, I hope that Shane and WCW beat the WWF's corporate ass. With all due respect to Linda McMahon, I would like Ric Flair, Arn Anderson, Sid Vicious, and guys like that to go to WCW. I can't wait to see what Shane O'Mac does with WCW, and I hope he moves quickly with it.

JASON
jjunior316@aol.com

Dear Jason,

I tried my best to find Jerry Lawler, but no one responded to my milk carton plea a few months ago. I think if you go to Memphis, he's still there doing something. I suggest checking the unemployment office first. If not, his tour of the indy circuit should be coming to a National Guard Armory near you soon. As for Joey Styles, he, and not Paul Heyman, should be sitting next to Jim Ross. The WWF needs him more than the perpetual startup WCW does. WCW needs to get a roster, a front office, and a TV deal before it can hire any of the guys you mentioned. This is crunch time for Shane, and it's his chance to prove he has a good business mind like his mom, or become a maniacal new age version of P.T. Barnum like his dad. Unfortunately, I don't see him or WCW succeeding at either.

Letter of the month (taken verbatim from the actual letter to share my torture with you all):

To: Brandi Mankiewicz

Do you no if wcw is going to be on tv. is wcw going to get some wwf.

ryan Martin
icp2000_99@yahoo.com

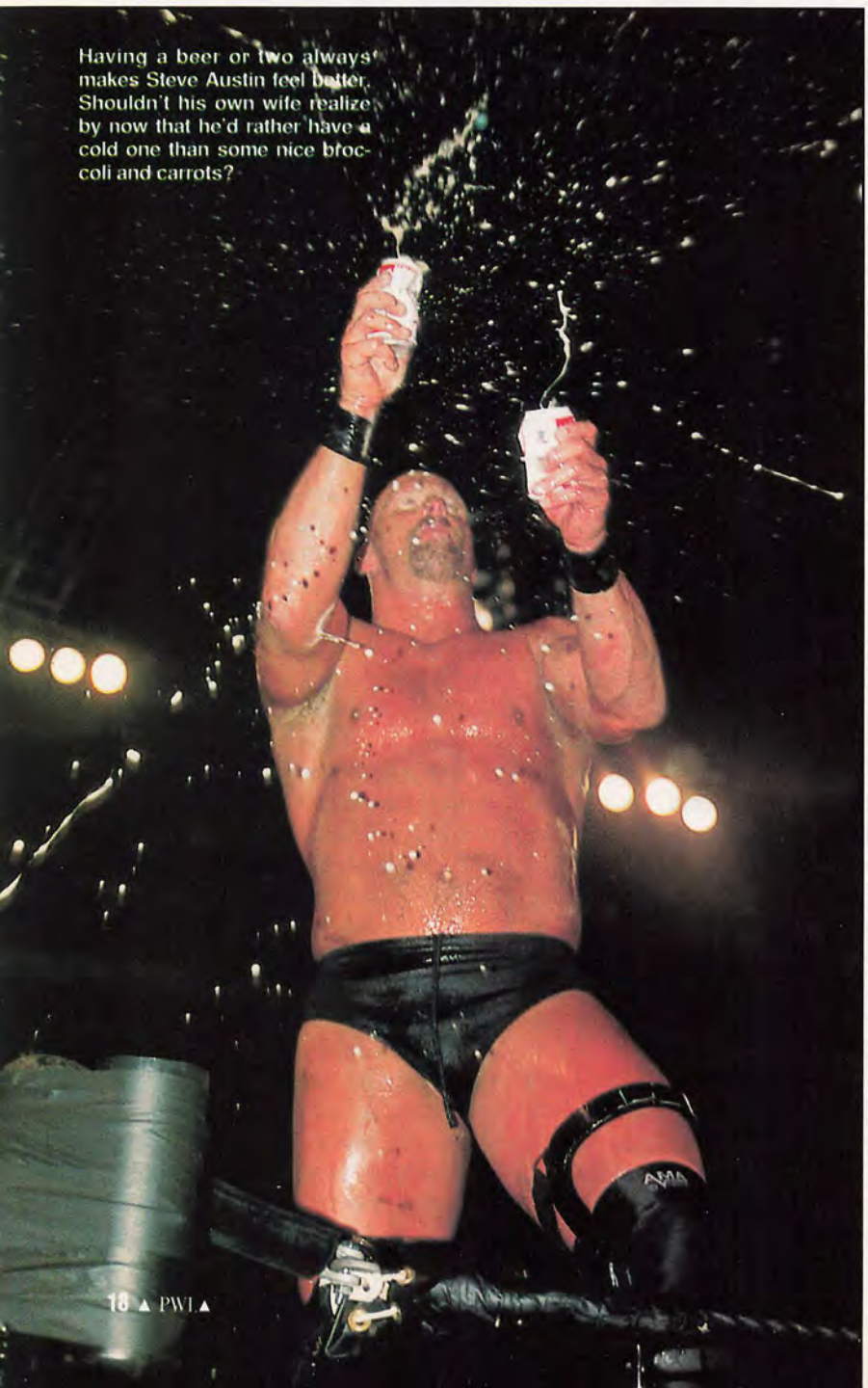
To Ryan Martin

I am amazed that you could correctly copy my last name from a *PWI* magazine, yet once you're writing on your own, you get lost. You have all the qualities of a good follower who will only get as far in life as the person in front of him. □

buzz cuts

By Liz Hunter

WELCOME TO "BUZZ CUTS," a column inspired by the incisive and biting style of "Krew-Cuts"—which previously occupied these two pages—and its originator, Frank Krewda. Our former associate editor/senior writer has gone on to other opportunities in the publishing industry. Frank, this one's for you.



Having a beer or two always makes Steve Austin feel better. Shouldn't his own wife realize by now that he'd rather have a cold one than some nice broccoli and carrots?

Does he always talk with his mouth full? You had to pity poor Debra, who looked dumbfounded as she tried to help her husband, WWF World heavyweight champion Steve Austin, during a recent edition of *Raw*. Austin had just been informed that CEO Linda McMahon and her kiss-up confidant, Mick Foley, had pressured Commissioner William Regal into forcing Austin into a three-way match against Chris Benoit and Chris Jericho at King of the Ring.

Bluntly put, Austin was in a foul mood. Debra tried to console the inconsolable by offering "The Texas Rattlesnake" some carrots, celery, and broccoli. "Come on, Steve, broccoli is your favorite," she said. Austin gave Debra an ugly sneer and stuffed a handful of broccoli in his gullet and started badmouthing her and spitting broccoli everywhere.

She must have noticed the same tactic had worked with Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley and Triple-H. They often enjoyed crudites when they were sitting backstage together. Get real, Debra. You should have at least offered him a Natural Light.

The nose knows. The footage of the surgery done on Triple-H's quads was disturbing for many viewers, and probably hardest on Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley. That was obvious by Stephanie's remarks to a nearby nurse. She was overwhelmed with concern for "The Game" and actually broke down into tears.

Wait a minute. That's natural, right? Stephanie is his wife. But not really. But she acts like she is. Why weren't Trish Stratus, Lita, or Terri at the hospital crying their eyes out? Point proven.

This wouldn't be the first time life imitated art in wrestling. Seriously, when was the last time a male-female wrestling relation-

It doesn't appear that Tony Schiavone has much of a future in the wrestling business. One of his *Nitro* colleagues, Scott Hudson, probably does, though. Liz Hunter thinks we were all probably too quick to rip poor Tony.

ship did *not* result in a relationship outside the arena, or at least in the dressing room?

Whether the Helmsleys' relationship is for the ring or for real, Stephanie's compassion was touching.

About a week before Triple-H's injury, he and Stephanie were at a racetrack for the debut of his funny car. Helmsley's catchphrases, such as "I am 'The Game'" and "Game Over" are on the vehicle. His likeness is painted on the hood in ferocious detail.

One feature is particularly prominent, prompting Triple-H to quip, "That's the great thing about my car. It always wins by a nose."

Pick up the phone for "T-Bone." Word out of Titan Towers is that Scott Hudson is the favorite to land the announcing gig for the new WCW program, if and when that becomes a reality. Apparently, he wasn't willing to give up his day job as a government employee in Atlanta during his long stint in WCW. Who could blame him?

Tony Schiavone's name is conspicuously absent from the short list. Even Mike Tenay has a better shot. What is wrong with the man Ric Flair affectionately refers to as "Antonio"? Schiavone has received a lot of unwarranted grief.

He was criticized for describing each edition of *Monday Nitro* during the 1996-97 run as "the most historic night in the history of our sport," or something of the like. From Schiavone's point of view, each show was better than the last. So what was the harm? He was criticized for his mean-spirited jab against Mick Foley, who won his first WWF title on a taped *Raw* the same night, which went as follows: "That'll put butts in seats." Schiavone was instructed to make that comment and later contacted Foley to apologize.

And, unfortunately, Schiavone was the voice of a lousy product for too long. Hyping that lousy product caused him to lose credibility. Yet booking was not Schiavone's responsibility. Trying to make sense of the booking was his responsibility. That was a job no one could envy.

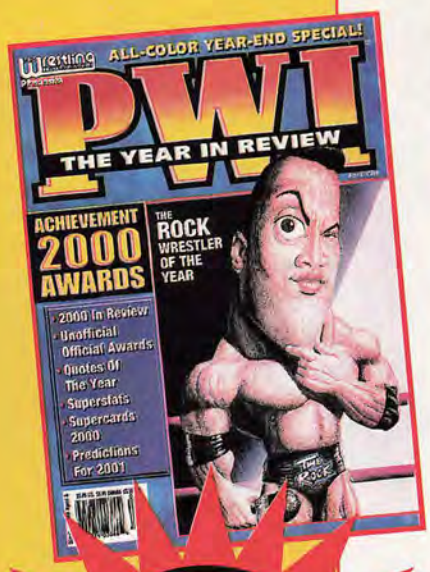
After 17 years with the NWA and WCW, Schiavone deserves better. Maybe he should grow that little mustache back.

Quick cuts. It was great when Kurt Angle compared Spike Dudley and Molly Holly's sugary romance to something you'd see on *Saved By The Bell*. This could mean former Memphis hopeful Dustin Diamond (Screech) is on his way ... What is Ric Flair doing out of the spotlight? Can't you imagine the "Nature Boy" cutting promos on Beth and Reid in the backyard? Just make sure those comments are politically correct, Ric ... Here's our insensitive remark of the month: In Kazuyuki Fujita, we finally have an IWGP champion whose name sounds like four sneezes instead of just three. □

strange list of the month

FIVE THINGS THAT PUT YOU TO SLEEP

1. Linda McMahon's kindergarten addresses on *Raw*
2. Mick Foley's overuse of cheap pops and cheap plugs
3. Yet another long, black limousine arriving at the arena
4. Steve Corino bleeding all over the place
5. Monday night movies on TNT



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April 1985: Jimmy Snuka: "I Want Piper!"—Even If It Kills The Tonga Kid. Centerfold: Ronnie Garvin. Plus: Flair-Rhodes, Terry Gordy, Jim Garvin, Road Warriors.

June 1985: Super Dream Contest: Play Dusty Rhodes' Trivia Game And Win His Boots! Centerfold: Barry Windham. Plus: Flair-Kerry, Fabulous Ones-Road Warriors, Hogan-Volkoff, Magnum T.A.

November 1987: When The Going Gets Tough ... Will Nikita Koloff Turn Bad Again? Centerfold: George Steele. Plus: Road Warriors, Hulk Hogan, Jimmy Hart, Barry Windham.

June 1988: Is The End Near For Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: Tully Blanchard. Plus: Midnight Rockers-Kelly & Kiniski, Al Perez, Dusty Rhodes, Magnificent Muraco.

November 1988: He's Back! But Is Savage's Belt Beyond Hulk's Reach? Centerfold: Midnight Express. Plus: Madusa-Hyatt, Rock 'n' Rolls, Dusty Rhodes, Warlord & Barbarian-Ax & Smash, Kevin Von Erich & Jessica McClure.

November 1989: Dusty Rhodes—Alone And In Danger. Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Luger-Steamboat, Ultimate Warrior, Robert Fuller, Rick Steiner.

January 1990: Warrior's Next Victim: Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: Sid Vicious. Plus: Kerry Von Erich, Jim Ross, Midnight Express.

February 1990: Luger's Holiday Gift For Flair: Has The "Total Package" Wrapped Up The NWA Title? Centerfold: Bret Hart. Plus: Hulk Hogan, Woman, Hennig-Beefcake, Toni Adams.

May 1990: Hulk Hogan: Primed And Ready For WrestleMania VI. Centerfold: Great Muta. Plus: Piper-Rude, Eric Embry, Rock 'n' Rolls, Sid Vicious, pain.

July 1990: The Maturing Of Lex Luger: The "Total Package" Becomes The People's Choice. Centerfold: Rick Martel. Plus: Skyscrapers, Bobby Heenan, Mr. Saito, referees.

September 1990: The Hulkster's Wrath: 7,000 Miles To Violent Redemption. Centerfold: The Steiners. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Sting, Destruction Crew, Four Horsemen, Curt Hennig.

October 1990: Sting's Painful Lesson: You'll Have No Friends At The Top. Centerfold: Brutus Beefcake. Plus: Orndorff-Blanchard, Tugboat, Teddy Long, Ultimate Warrior, Road Warriors.

November 1990: Sting Wins The NWA World Title! "If This Is A Dream, Don't Wake Me." Centerfold: Road Warriors. Plus: Rude-Warrior, Ric Flair, Funk-Hansen, muscle and power.

February 1991: WrestleMania VII Contest. Centerfold: 1991 calendar. Plus: Sid Vicious, DiBiase-Rhodes, Scott Steiner, Power & Glory, Terry Funk.

March 1991 (Special Issue): 1990—The Year In Wrestling. 1990 In Review, Achievement '90 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 1991.

April 1991: Sgt. Slaughter Guilty Of Treason! Centerfold: Tom Zenk. Plus: Sting, Magnum T.A., Jesse Ventura, Lawler-Gilbert, Hogan & Warrior.

June 1991: Hulk Hogan: America's Hero. Centerfold: Hacksaw Duggan. Plus: Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Nasty Boys, Steiners, Simmons-Reed.

July 1991: The War Is Over! Hulk Hogan Liberates The WWF Belt From Sgt. Slaughter! Centerfold: Brian Pillman. Plus: Horsemen, Lex Luger, Eric Embry, Demolition.

August 1991 (Special Issue): Supercards '91. Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: WrestleMania VII, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior, Owen Hart, Koloff-Luger.

October 1991: Sid Justice: The Second Coming Of Hulk Hogan. Centerfold: Lex Luger. Plus: Hogan-Slaughter, Terrence Taylor, Barry Windham, Williams-Bigelow.

November 1991: Your Wedding Gift For Savage & Elizabeth: Help Lift The "Macho Man's" Suspension! Centerfold: Bobby Eaton. Plus: Tito Santana, Bushwhackers, Jushin Liger, Brian Pillman.

January 1992: Ric Flair: He'll Make Hulk Hogan Look Like An Amateur. Centerfold: Ron Simmons. Plus: Rick Steiner, Ultimate Warrior, Lex Luger.

February 1992: Has Hulk Hogan Had Enough? Centerfold: 1992 calendar. Plus: Sting, Justice-Roberts, hot prospects, Eddie Gilbert.

May 1992: Revitalized In Tokyo: Hulk Hogan Is Super-Psyched For WrestleMania VII! Centerfold: Rick Rude. Plus: Sting & Muta-Steiners, Jarrett & Fuller, Lightning Kid, Randy Savage, intimidation.

June 1992: Exclusive *PWI* Interview: Roddy Piper Speaks Out! Centerfold: Dustin Rhodes. Plus: Dangerously-Sting, Abdullah-Cactus, Sid Justice, Randy Savage.

July 1992: The Best Of The Best—The Masters Of Their Craft. Centerfold: Randy Savage. Plus: Liger-Pillman, Jim Neidhart, U.S.-Japan, Ric Flair.

September 1992: Savage vs. Sting: Why It Isn't That Unlikely. Centerfold: Nikita Koloff. Plus: Steiners, Barry Windham, Sid Justice, Hodge & Weston, Shawn Michaels.

October 1992: The Hatred Still Runs Deep: Ultimate Warrior vs. Randy Savage—They'll Settle Up At SummerSlam! Centerfold: Cactus Jack. Plus: Steve Williams, Tom Zenk, WWF title controversy, fire match, Eric Embry.

November 1992: The British Bulldog: Hounding The Hitman. Centerfold: Ultimate Warrior. Plus: Honky Tonk Man, Steiners, Undertaker, Madusa, perfect wrestler.

February 1993: No One Can Cut Down Razor Ramon. Centerfold: Curt Hennig. Plus: Jake Roberts, Pillman-Dustin, Ric Flair-Road Warriors, Rick Rude, Snuka-Muraco.

May 1993: WrestleMania Without Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: The Undertaker. Plus: Ron Simmons,

Cactus Jack, Madusa-Sherri, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior.

April 1996: WCW World Title Turmoil. Centerfold: The Kid. Plus: Hulk Hogan, Ahmed Johnson, Bob Armstrong, Michaels-Bret, Public Enemy.

May 1996: Un-Natural! The WWF Has Finally Gone Too Far! Centerfold: Public Enemy. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn, Ric Flair, Giant.

October 1996: Peaking Too Soon: Will The Giant Be Ruined By His Own Success? Centerfold: Goldust. Plus: Big Van Vader, Ric Flair, Bulldog, Lex Luger.

Winter 1996 (Special Issue): *PWI* 500. Centerfold: Shawn Michaels.

February 1997: Mr. Perfect: "Shawn Michaels Stole My Life." Centerfold: "Psycho" Sid. Plus: Kroffat & Furnas, Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, New Razor & New Diesel.

April 1997: How Winning The Title Saved Psycho Sid's Sanity. Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: Rocky Maivia, Jeff Jarrett, Unofficial/Officials, Chris Jericho.

February 1998: Sting vs. Hogan—The Match Of The Century! Centerfold: Hogan vs. Sting fight poster. Plus: 16-page Starrcade preview, Perry Saturn, Dude Love.

March 1998 (Special Issue): 1997—The Year In Wrestling. 1997 In Review, Achievement '97 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 1998.

April 1998: The DeGeneration X Debate: Will It Save Or Ruin The WWF? Centerfold: Ken Shamrock. Plus: Bret Hart, Undertaker-Kane, Melanie Pillman.

May 1998: Starrcade Scandal! We Hate To Say It ... But Give The Belt Back To Hogan: Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Mero & Sable, Taz, Taka Michinoku.

June 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 PWI Poll. Centerfold: Steve Austin. Plus: Sabu, Lex Luger, Sting, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg.

July 1998: WWF vs. WCW: Which Is Better? Centerfold: Benoit, Bill Goldberg, Ahmed Johnson.

October 1998: Bret Screws Bret, Part II. Centerfold: Hunter Hearst Helmsley. Plus: Jim Ross, Marcus Bagwell, WWF controversy, FBI.

December 1998: Gold Rush! Get Ready For The Most Awesome WCW Title Reign Ever! Centerfold: Undertaker. Plus: The Giant, Vader, Guerreros, Ken Shamrock.

Holiday 1998 (100-Page Special Issue): *PWI* 500. Eighth Annual Special.

January 1999: No Evil! Can Today's Fans Accept The Warrior's Creed? Centerfold: Chyna. Plus: Sting, Bill Goldberg, Summerslam.

March 1999 (100-Page Special Issue): 1998—The Year In Wrestling. 1998 In Review, Achievement '98 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 1999.

April 1999: The Crock! The Title Change That Screwed The World! Centerfold: Chris Jericho. Plus: Bill Goldberg, Tommy Dreamer, Booker T, more Unofficial/Officials.

May 1999: Who Holds The Key To WrestleMania XV? Centerfold: Konnan. Plus: Mark Henry, Sting-Nash, Bill Alfonso, Brian Hildebrand.

June 1999: (100-Page Special Issue): The 1999 *PWI* Poll. Plus: Mankind, Flair & Turner, VMac, Steiners, New Japan-UFO.

July 1999: Warning! This Team Will Self-Destruct In 15 Seconds! Centerfold: X-Pac. Plus: New Jack-Dudleys, Jesse James, Venis & Godfather, Sting-Bischoff-Flair.

August 1999: (100-Page Special Issue): Supercards '99: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously. Plus: Super 8, Bam Bam Bigelow, Jerry Lawler, tag team wrestling.

September 1999: Why Stone-Cold Might Get Out While He's Still On Top! Centerfold: Sting. Plus: Kidman & Misterio, The Rock, Bret Hart, Taz-Sabu.

October 1999: Why The World Must Fear Scott Steiner, By Buff Bagwell. Centerfold: Mankind. Plus: Kane & X-Pac, The Godfather, Perry Saturn, 20th anniversary readers' poll.

November 1999: The Women Of The WWF: There's More To Their Power Than Their Looks. Centerfold: Owen Hart. Plus: Rey Misterio Jr., Roddy Piper, Steiners, Steve Austin.

December 1999: Steve Austin: "CEO This! I'm The Damn Champ!" Centerfold: Rey Misterio Jr. Plus: Randy Savage, Jimmy Hart, WCW youth, Billy Gunn.

Holiday 1999 (100-Page Special Issue): *PWI* 500. Ninth Annual Special.

January 2000: The Millennium Man Mouths Off! An Unforgettable Hour With Chris Jericho! Centerfold: Taz. Plus: Chris Benoit, Sid-Goldberg, Triple-H.

February 2000: The Master Manipulator! How Stone-Cold Controls The WWF. Centerfold: Kane. Plus: Paul Heyman, Hogan-Bret-Sting-Luger.

March 2000 (100-Page Special Issue): 1999—The Year In Wrestling. 1999 In Review, Achievement '99 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 2000.

April 2000: The Rock vs. Stone-Cold: Let's Settle It At WrestleMania. Centerfold: Chris Benoit. Plus: DDP, Goldberg-Sid, more Unofficial/Officials.

May 2000 (100-Page Special Issue): The Y2K *PWI* Poll. Plus: Mitsuharu Misawa, Triple-H, Bret Hart, Hollys, Chyna & Aysa, ECW returnees.

June 2000: Just Wondering, Steph ... Is Triple-H Worth Your Billion-Dollar Inheritance? Centerfold: The Rock. Plus: Heyman-Van Dam, Vader, NWO.

July 2000: Call It A Wrap, Jack! You've Done Your Share ... Go Home! Centerfold: Sid Vicious. Plus: Dusty Rhodes, Disco Inferno, DDP, Dudleys-Hardys.

August 2000 (100-Page Special Issue): Supercards 2000: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously. Plus: Rob Van Dam, greatest supercards, Super 8.

September 2000: Wrestle McMania! Why The Peace Can't Last. Centerfold: Jeff Jarrett. Plus: Eric Bischoff, Dudleys, Raven.

October 2000: Scott Steiner: The Superstars The WWF Let Slip Away: Centerfold: Rikishi. Plus: Shawn Michaels, Austin-Rock, Rhino-RVD.

November 2000: The Rock vs. Triple-H. Our Special 50-Category Analysis. Pinups: Extreme wrestling. Plus: Nash-Steiner-Hall, Hardcore Holly, wrestling too extreme?

December 2000: Head Hog! Does Undertaker Have Enough Gas In His Tank To Rumble To The Top? Centerfold: Dallas Page. Plus: Kurt Angle, Rikishi, Vampiro-Sting, Japan.

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Holiday 2000 (116-Page Special): *PWI* 500. Includes: The editors' views, a look back at 1991's top 25, Achievement 2000 ballot.

January 2001: Who Does He Really Hate? Someone Will Pay For Austin's Pain! Plus: Steven Richards, Justin Credible, Gordon Solie, Jeff Jarrett, Arn-Sid.

February 2001 (116-Page Special): The State Of The Game. Includes: The states of the WWF, WCW, ECW, independents, international, the business, the art.

March 2001: Hulk Hogan: WWF Fans Want Him Back! Plus: Mike Awesome, Rikishi, Jerry Lynn, Elix Skipper, Triple-H.

April 2001 (116-Page Special): 2000—The Year In Wrestling. 2000 In Review, Achievement 2000 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 2001.

May 2001: The WrestleMania Curse! Will The Great One Ever Win The Big One? Plus: Vince McMahon, William Regal, Page & Nash, Ivory, Lance Storm, ECW.

June 2001 (116-Page Special): The 2001 *PWI* Poll. Plus: Ric Flair, Chyna, Steve Austin.

July 2001: Women's Work! It Ain't What It Used To Be! Plus: Dudleys, Chavo Guerrero Jr., Justin Credible, Francine, Scott Steiner.

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the 2001 mid

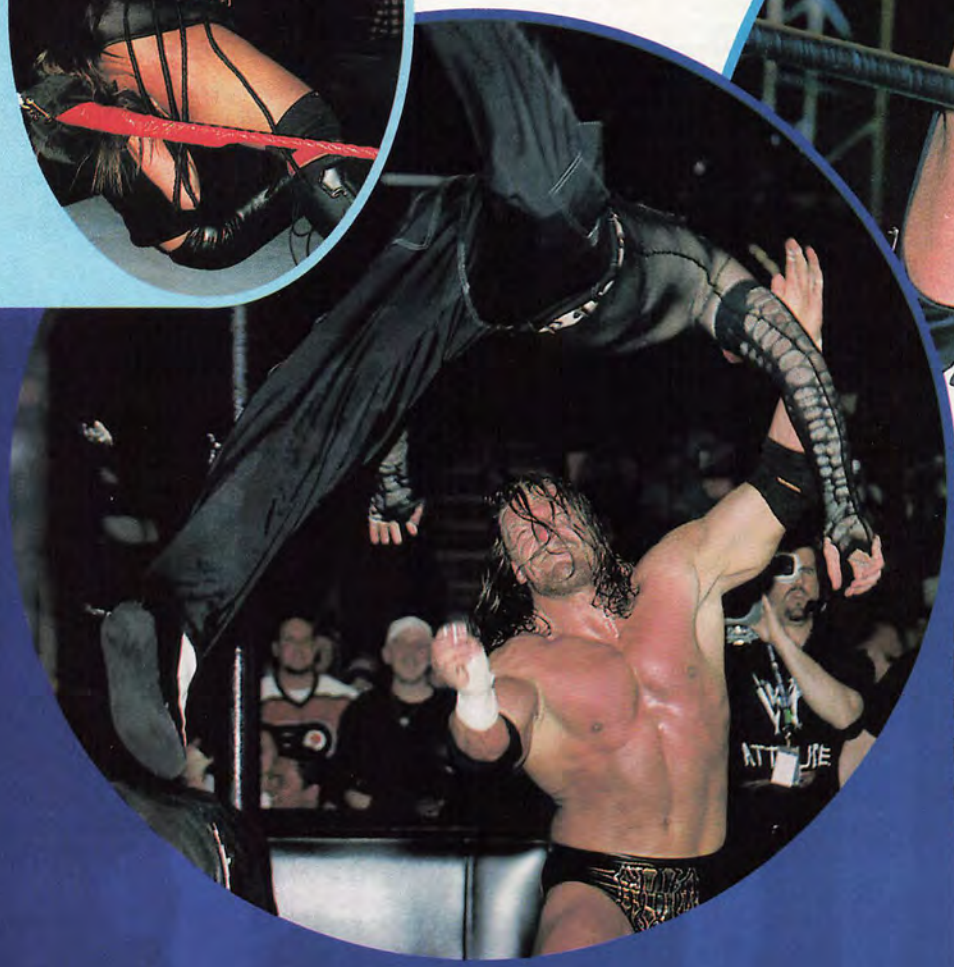
WHAT EXACTLY IS a mid-year report anyway? Is it simply a holdover until we get to the "Year In Review"? Actually, *PWI*'s Mid-Year Report is a lot more than that.

Year-end retrospectives are usually the first attempts to place major events from the previous 365 days into historical context. This applies not only to wrestling, but other sports, politics, and just about any endeavor that generates a decent number of headlines per year.

But even those year-end retrospectives are faulty. Too often, the important events earlier in the year are lost in the fog of time as more recent news, which may or may not ultimately be that significant, gets more attention.

Want examples? Kurt Angle's WWF World title victory last November enabled him to receive twice as many votes as Lita for Rookie of the Year, and helped him edge out Triple-H as the Most Hated Wrestler of the Year. Steve Corino's ECW World title win in November wrapped up the Most Improved Wrestler of the Year for him. Would they have fared so well in the voting if those victories happened in January or February?

Probably not.



-year report

That's why we present this special issue dedicated to the half-year. In past years, individual mid-year reports for the WWF, WCW, and ECW have appeared in *The Wrestler* and *Inside Wrestling.* The demise of ECW and current restructuring of WCW under the watchful eyes of the McMahon family have inspired us to do all-in-one coverage this year. The WWF dominated the headlines, but you'll realize there's more to the wrestling world than the McMahons, Steve Austin, The Rock, and Triple-H.

As with our past coverage, we have included the editors' picks for the half-year's best wrestler and tag team. We've included the most popular and most hated wrestlers, too.

Don't you think WWF television delivered some fascinating moments in the first six months of 2001? We do, and that's why we chose the top 10 moments of *Raw* and *Smackdown.*

If WWF TV was good, that means WWF pay-per-view had to be even better. On PPV, wrestling—not talking—is the thing. We analyze the top 20 pay-per-view matches—and that includes a few from WCW and ECW.

In addition to all that, we have compiled the *"PWI* 50"—but it's not what you think it is. Instead of a listing of the top 50 wrestlers of the half-year, it's a compilation of the top 50 news stories that have helped to make 2001 worth talking about. The WWF's purchase of WCW was the undisputed top story, and we'd be hard-pressed to find one single reader to disagree.

Some readers might disagree with our rankings of the stories. Was the Women of Wrestling pay-per-view really more significant than Steve Corino's capture of the NWA title? Why was Kazuyuki Fujita's IWGP title victory omitted? Determining a top 50 story isn't always easy.

It was easier, however, to spot those weird and wacky moments that'll make you wonder: What were those people doing (or thinking … or saying)?! We've included quite a few.

Let us know your opinions. Now turn the page and do a little reminiscing.

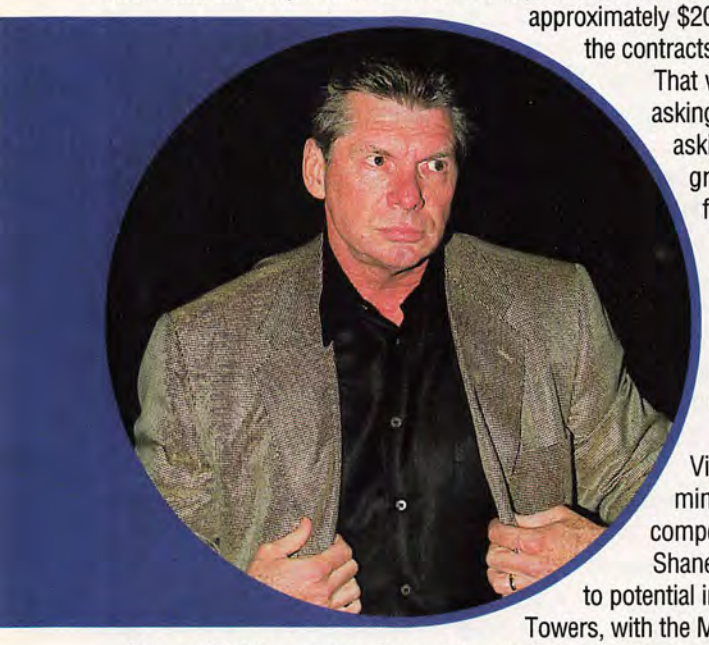
MID-YEAR REPORT

THE PWI 50

the biggest stories of the half year

The WWF purchases WCW

Vince McMahon's 20-year quest to control the entire wrestling industry ended on March 23, when World Wrestling Federation Entertainment Inc. purchased World Championship Wrestling from the newly merged AOL Time Warner. Sources said WWFE paid approximately $20-million for the company, including trademarks, the tape library, and the contracts of 24 wrestlers.



That was a paltry sum compared to Turner Broadcasting System's original asking price. In fact, talks derailed the previous October when TBS' high asking price, combined with Viacom's concerns that WWF/WCW programming would boost its cable competitors, drove the McMahons from the negotiating table.

In the weeks leading up to March 23, it was assumed Fusient Media Ventures—in a bid spearheaded by former WCW President Eric Bischoff—would purchase the Turner property. That deal fizzled when a closer examination of WCW's financial state caused a key investor to drop out and, ultimately, when new Turner Broadcasting CEO Jamie Kellner canceled *Nitro* and *Thunder* from the networks.

That dropped the asking price significantly and eliminated Viacom's primary concern with the venture. It ensured WCW programming would appear on TNN or other Viacom networks rather than on competing channels.

Shane McMahon adopted the on-air role of the new WCW owner, leading to potential interpromotional warfare. In essence, WCW's new home became Titan Towers, with the McMahons in charge.

Vince McMahon originally purchased the Capitol Wrestling Corporation, later known as Titan Sports and World Wrestling Federation Entertainment, from his father in 1982.

ECW files for bankruptcy

Extreme Championship Wrestling, the only independent promotion to gain recognition as a Big Three federation, filed for bankruptcy on April 5. In reality, ECW had ceased being a major force in January, when its last pay-per-view—Guilty as Charged—was held.

The company revolutionized wrestling in the 1990s, inspiring the WWF to adopt its current "Attitude" marketing campaign. ECW encouraged the use of tables, ladders, and chairs, and was known for its crude and gritty storylines.

Paul Heyman led ECW during its most successful era, stunning industry insiders with a relatively high buy rate for its first pay-per-view, 1997's Barely Legal. ECW's popularity drew the attention of the WWF and WCW, which often raided its talent pool in addition to adopting its concepts.

The ECW championship attained world title recognition from *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* when it found a national cable home on The Nashville Network in 1999. While *ECW On TNN* earned the highest ratings of the network's Friday night lineup, Heyman's relationship with executives was usually adversarial.

ECW's fate was sealed when TNN acquired WWF programming. A no-compete clause led executives to cancel *ECW On TNN* in the fall of 2000. Although Vince McMahon offered to waive the clause until the end of the year, Heyman opted to end the show anyway. ECW's financial insolvency became more severe, leading to its eventual shutdown.

ECW traced its roots to the early-1990s, back to the old Tri-State Wrestling and, later, Eastern Championship Wrestling.

stories of the half year

Vince, Shane face off on *Raw, Nitro*

The WWF chairman appeared on *WCW Monday Nitro* with the confidence of a Roman conqueror and the smugness of a vindictive child. But who could blame Vince McMahon for gloating over his defeat of Ted Turner and WCW? It was an opportunity McMahon couldn't resist … and it made for the most compelling night in wrestling history.

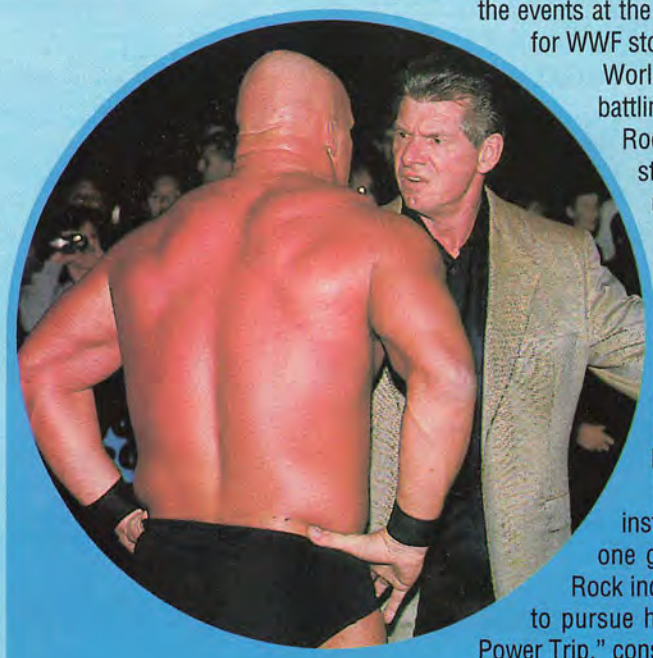
McMahon explained the WWF purchase at the outset of *Nitro* in a taped segment. WCW delivered two historic matches between 8 and 9:40 p.m. Eastern time, Booker T's World title victory over Scott Steiner, and what appeared to be Sting's last match against perennial rival Ric Flair. *Nitro* briefly paid homage to past WCW/NWA World champions.

In the joint address, airing in *Nitro's* final segment, McMahon conducted a thumbs up/thumbs down test to gauge fan reaction to certain WCW stars. Booker T, Scott Steiner, Sting, Bill Goldberg, and Buff Bagwell all passed. Reactions to Hulk Hogan and Lex Luger were strong, yet mixed.

McMahon continued his gloating. "People ask me, 'How did you do it, Vince? You were up against this conglomerate, this millionaire. How did you do this?' Some would say I had some help along the way with certain WWF superstars, but the truth is I did it all on my own. It was my effort. It was my money. 'Okay, Vince, how can you possibly beat a billionaire?' There's only one way. Become one yourself!"

Then McMahon vowed to put WCW on the shelf, to bury it forever. That's when Shane McMahon appeared on the TitanTron, live from the *Nitro* broadcast in Florida, and proclaimed, "The name on the contract [with TBS] does say 'McMahon.' However, the contract reads 'Shane McMahon.' I now own WCW! And, Dad, just like WCW did in the past, it kicked your ass in the past and it will again."

Austin, McMahon, Helmsley form alliance



Perhaps it was in "The Rattlesnake's" eyes. Maybe The Rock was too popular. Most likely, the events at the conclusion of WrestleMania X-Seven were the only logical path for WWF storylines to follow.

World champion The Rock and his challenger, Steve Austin, had been battling for 20 minutes when Vince McMahon walked to ringside. The Rock delivered the people's elbow onto "Stone-Cold," only to be stymied by McMahon, who pulled Rock off at the two-count. In unsettling fashion, Austin asked McMahon to bring a steel chair into the ring. Austin held The Rock as McMahon smashed him with chair shots. Finally, Austin pinned Rock to begin his sixth WWF World title reign. And Austin shook McMahon's hand.

A steel cage rematch was held the following night on *Raw*. When McMahon entered the cage and saved Austin from a pinfall attempt by The Rock, Triple-H ran to ringside with a sledgehammer. Anticipating a potential babyface turn by Triple-H, the crowd went into an uproar.

After teasing a fight with Austin and McMahon, Triple-H instead used the sledgehammer to bash The Rock. The three-on-one gang attack lasted several minutes. McMahon suspended The Rock indefinitely later in the week, which enabled the people's champion to pursue his acting career. Austin and Helmsley, dubbed the "Two-Man Power Trip," consolidated most of the WWF's championships within a month.

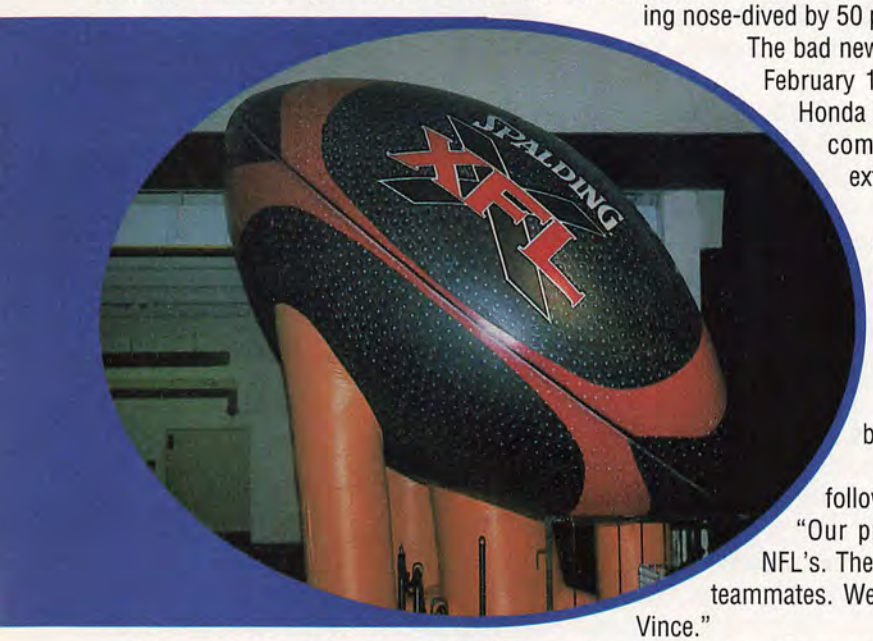
MID-YEAR REPORT

THE PWI 50

the biggest stories of the half year

The XFL era begins ... and ends

The hype generated by Vince McMahon and WWFE seemed justified when the XFL scored a very impressive 10.3 in its February 3 debut as part of NBC's Saturday night lineup. But panic signals went off the very next week when the overall rating nose-dived by 50 percent, to 5.1.



The bad news continued. The overall rating dropped to 3.8 on February 17 and below 3.0 by the first weekend in March. Honda Motor Company was the first advertiser to pull its commercials, while others were compensated with extra air time.

Here were some of the problems: The quality of play wasn't very good, football fans didn't like the infusion of wrestling-style storylines and WWF personalities, and, most surprisingly, the XFL appealed to much older males and failed to capture the 18-to-29-year-old demographic.

XFL ratings were disappointing across the board, on NBC, UPN, and TNN.

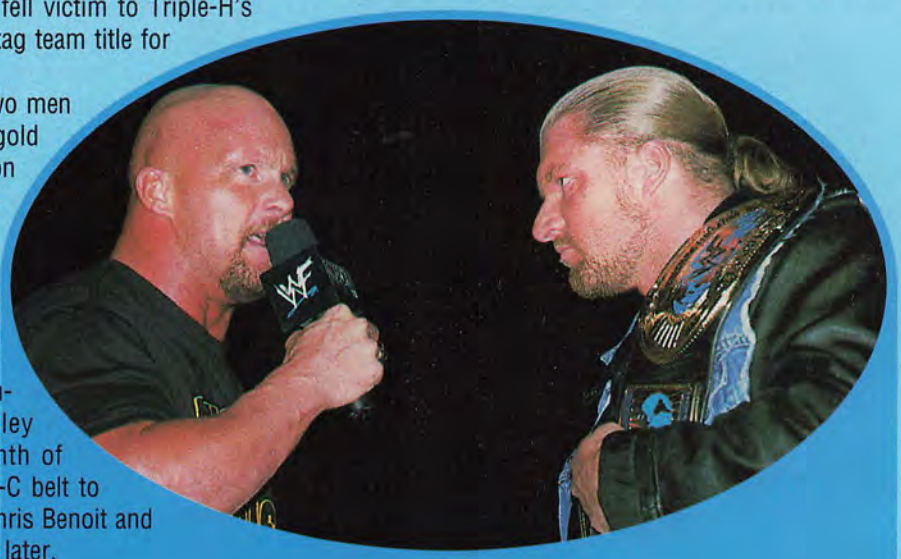
Dick Ebersol, chairman of NBC Sports, said the following on MSNBC's *Imus In The Morning* program: "Our preseason training wasn't nearly as long as the NFL's. The players didn't have enough time to gel with their teammates. We dropped the ball. I freely admit it, and so does Vince."

Before the start of the season, WWFE executives were predicting an actual profit within a few months. In the end, WWFE and NBC lost approximately $35-million each.

Austin and Helmsley grab tag team belts

Ordinarily, two talented superstars such as Steve Austin and Triple-H capturing the WWF World tag team title wouldn't be an industry-shaking event. But the stakes were higher than usual at Backlash. Austin was the WWF World champion, while Triple-H was the Intercontinental champ. The Undertaker and Kane were the World tag team champions.

This unique match placed all the championships on the line. The man with his shoulders pinned to the mat would lose everything. In the case of Kane, who fell victim to Triple-H's ubiquitous sledgehammer, he lost the tag team title for both himself and his brother.



Never before in WWF history had two men consolidated so much championship gold for themselves. Triple-H's comments on *Raw* a week earlier seemed ever appropriate. "This ring, this arena, the lights, the ceiling, everything in the World Wrestling Federation belongs to us, including 'Taker and Kane's asses."

Perhaps the dominance of the "Two-Man Power Trip" wasn't that complete, but it gave Austin and Helmsley plenty of stroke throughout the month of May—until "The Game" dropped the I-C belt to Kane at Judgment Day (May 20) and Chris Benoit and Chris Jericho won the tag title one night later.

stories of the half year

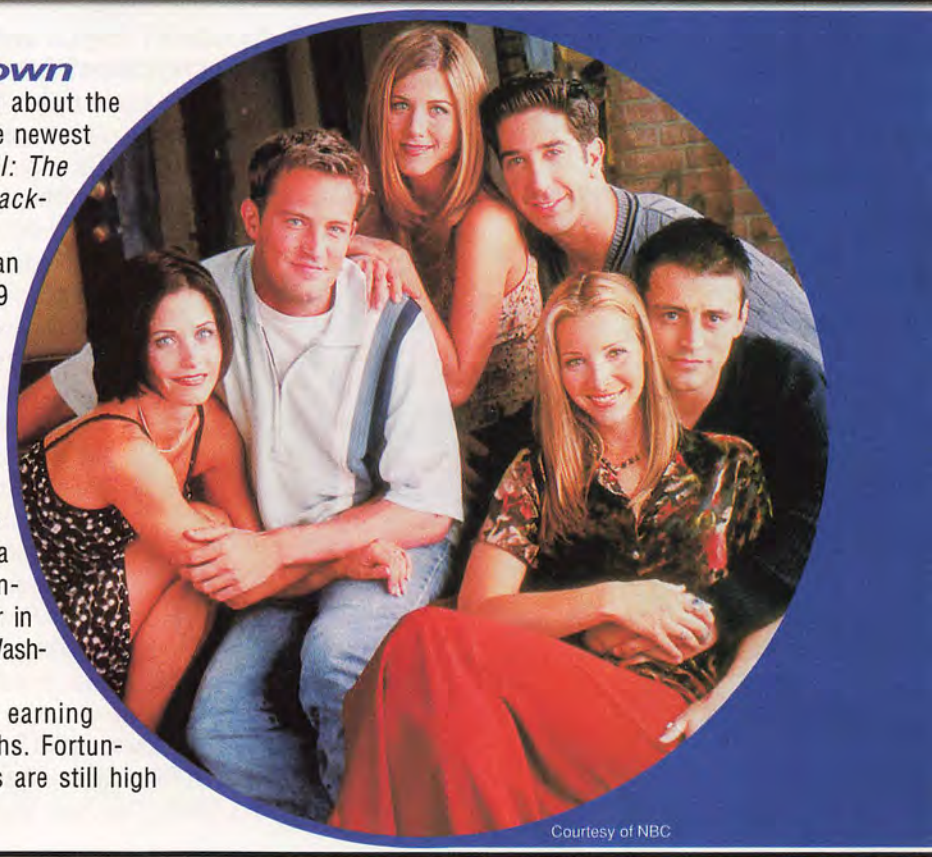
Survivor and *Friends* double-team *Smackdown*

The entertainment media was buzzing about the showdown between NBC's *Friends* and the newest arrival to Thursday night TV, *Survivor II: The Australian Outback* on CBS. It was *Smackdown,* however, that lost the most.

Indeed, *Smackdown* routinely earned an average overall rating of 4.7 since its 1999 debut. The UPN show scored a very impressive 4.9 the week before *Survivor's* debut on Thursday night.

All that changed on February 1. *Survivor,* a special 40-minute *Friends,* and *Smackdown* engaged in a triple threat ratings battle. *Smackdown's* rating plummeted to 4.0, despite the fact it was billed as a special Xtreme edition. To be fair, it's important to note that *Smackdown* didn't air in its regular time slot in two major markets, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia.

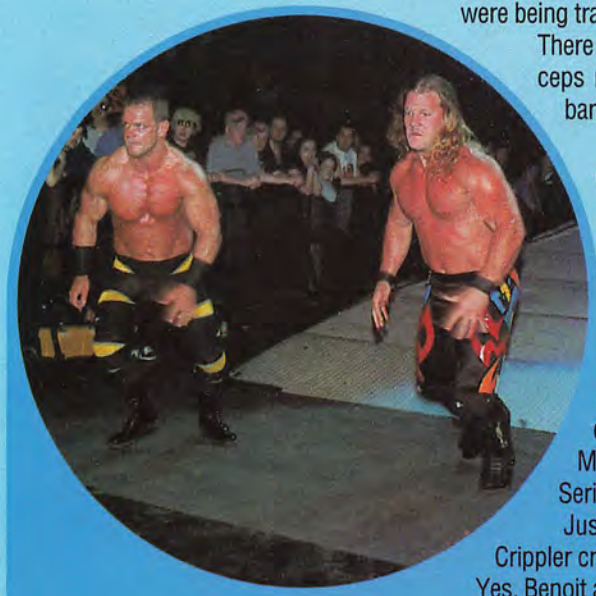
By the end of May, *Smackdown* was earning 3.7, a full-point drop in only three months. Fortunately, overall ratings at these lower levels are still high for UPN.



Courtesy of NBC

Benoit and Jericho capture WWF tag title

Chris Benoit and Chris Jericho's victory over the WWF's top two active stars—World champ Steve Austin and Triple-H—signaled the long-awaited shakeup to carry the federation into the summer months and beyond. Benoit and Jericho capturing their first WWF World tag team championship was almost an afterthought compared to the real news: They were being transformed into genuine main-eventers.



There was another consequence of this match. Triple-H suffered a torn quadriceps muscle during an in-ring encounter with Jericho, leaving "The Game" barely able to finish the bout.

That made the push of Benoit and Jericho even more necessary, and committed the WWF to making it succeed. The two Canadians furthered their momentum during a *Smackdown* taping the following night by defeating Edge and Christian, The Hardy Boyz, and The Dudley Boyz in TLC III.

Their greatest personal moment occurred a week later on *Raw,* shown live from the Saddledome in Calgary, Alberta. One of their mentors, Stu Hart, and members of the famous Hart family sat at ringside as the entire show revolved around Benoit and Jericho. Benoit nearly defeated Austin, using the sharpshooter no less, but the meddling Mr. McMahon orchestrated a finish reminiscent of the infamous Survivor Series '97 double-cross involving Bret Hart.

Just before *Raw* went off the air, Benoit had McMahon ensnared in the Crippler crossface as Austin screamed in the Walls of Jericho.

Yes, Benoit and Jericho's time had finally arrived.

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Triple-H injures leg; expected to miss several months

The injury that complicated Triple-H's career happened simply enough. At one point during the match in which he and World champ Steve Austin lost the tag team belts to Chris Benoit and Chris Jericho, he attempted to rescue "Stone-Cold" from the Walls of Jericho.

Triple-H succeeded, but paid a heavy price. As Helmsley planted his left leg, he felt the severe tear. During an interview on wwf.com, he said the pain was so intense that it felt as if he'd been shot in the leg.

Helmsley's misery didn't end there. He and Jericho brawled on the arena floor and, eventually, Y2J put him in the Walls of Jericho atop the announcers' table. Said Triple-H: "It felt like he was ripping my leg off. It really did."

Moments later, Helmsley accidentally hit Austin with a sledgehammer, enabling Jericho to score the three-count.

Paramedics and trainers helped Triple-H to the backstage area after *Raw* went off the air. The team doctor for the San Jose Sharks, who was backstage, immediately scheduled an MRI. It was revealed that a lower layer of his quadriceps muscle was torn.

Famed specialist Dr. James Andrews performed surgery three days later in Birmingham, Alabama. He estimated it would be at least four months before "The Game" could return to action.

Rhyno unifies ECW World and TV titles

The "Man Beast's" domination of ECW's final pay-per-view was ruthless and sickening. The TV champ wasn't even scheduled to wrestle for the World championship at Guilty as Charged in January. The Sandman had already defeated Justin Credible and defending champ Steve Corino for the title a few minutes earlier.

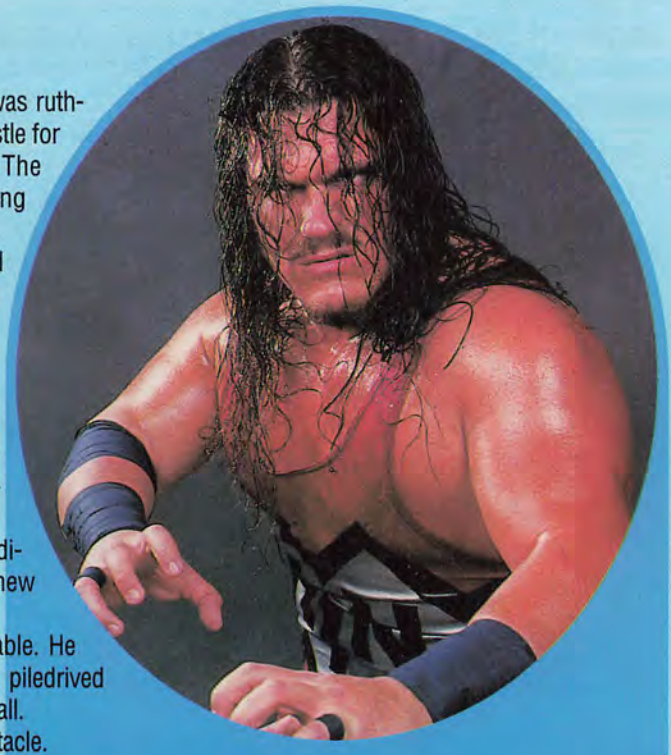
Maybe Rhyno sensed this was ECW's last hurrah and decided to make his move. It did seem suspicious, however, that Rhyno wasn't scheduled for any match on the pay-per-view.

Da Baldies ran into the ring during The Sandman's post-match celebration, but were driven off by, ironically, Credible and Corino. Rhyno, who probably planned the run-in, capitalized on the diversion by goring Sandman. He grabbed the microphone and asked an interesting question: "Why am I TV champion when this company doesn't even have TV?!"

Rhyno warned if he didn't receive a World title match immediately, Sandman's family sitting at ringside "would die." The new champion accepted under duress.

The assault continued. Rhyno gored Sandman through a table. He piledrived the hardcore icon through a table at ringside. Rhyno piledrived him again through a table remnant in the ring and scored the pinfall.

Never had an ECW World title change been such a brutal spectacle.



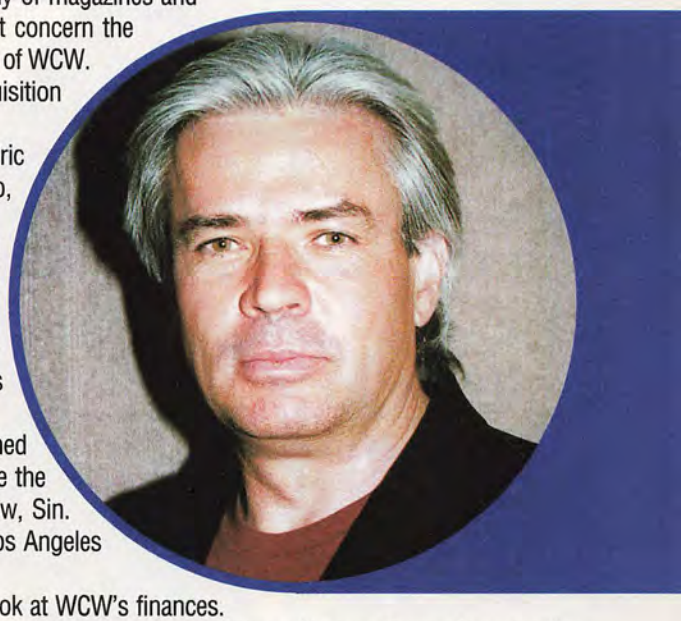
stories of the half year

Fusient's takeover of WCW a bit premature

The acquisition was the lead for every news column in the *PWI* family of magazines and was the first bulleted headline on every wrestling Web site. But it didn't concern the WWF's purchase of WCW. It concerned Fusient Media Ventures' purchase of WCW.

What would Wall Street call it? A phantom purchase? It was the acquisition that didn't happen.

It wasn't just the wrestling media who thought it was a done deal. Eric Bischoff, AOL Time Warner, and probably Vince McMahon thought so, too.



"We're going to re-establish WCW as the champion in professional wrestling entertainment," declared Fusient CEO Brian Bedol. "There is huge untapped potential for the franchise and, with Eric Bischoff on board, we will crank everything up to make the WCW franchise even bigger, better, stronger, and more entertaining than anything wrestling fans have experienced before."

Turner executives were so certain a final agreement would be reached that Bischoff was given unofficial control of WCW in early-January (once the deal was first announced) and helped to book that month's pay-per-view, Sin. Plans were already being made to move WCW headquarters to either Los Angeles or New York.

Key Fusient investors began having doubts when they got a closer look at WCW's finances. One dropped out completely and others wanted a dramatically lowered price. But it was Jamie Kellner, the new Turner Broadcasting CEO, who effectively killed the deal by discontinuing pro wrestling on the Turner networks.

And buying a company losing about $60-million per year, without national television programs already in existence, was a venture too risky even for Fusient.

Lawler and The Kat leave the WWF

"The King" and The Kat thought their careers were going well in the WWF. Because The Kat had been largely absent from *Raw* and *Smackdown* for several months, Jerry Lawler suggested a storyline in which The Kat would be forced to join Right To Censor against her will. WWF writers seemingly liked the concept, and Stevie Richards beat Lawler at No Way Out to secure her services.

So why did the WWF release Stacy Carter only two days later? Lawler said he was told that Stacy had an attitude problem. Lawler believed it might have been backstage politicking more than anything else and, at least until he could discover the real cause, decided to leave the WWF under protest.

"Let me say that I don't really know what is going on other than that I feel there is more to this than meets the eye," Lawler wrote on his Web site. "I'm not knocking anyone in the WWF; they've been too good to me to do that. I just don't really understand this whole scenario."

Sources close to the situation say it could be possible for Lawler to return, but his wife couldn't be part of the deal.

Lawler might have done his cause more harm than good when he posted the WWF's general phone number and e-mail addresses of several key employees on his Web site to drum up fan support. WWF lawyers told him to cease and desist. The 30-year veteran also claimed WWF personnel confiscated pro-Lawler signs at the following week's *Raw*.

As of June, negotiations regarding Lawler's return continued.

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Paul Heyman joins the WWF as commentator and writer

"You're joined by Paul Heyman because last Tuesday night The Kat was released by the WWF, and her husband, Jerry 'The King' Lawler, to his credit, walked out right along with her. But where there is chaos, there is opportunity. And tonight, just like TNN threw off ECW for the WWF, 'The King' is gone, and in his chair is Paul E. And the 'E' is for 'Extreme'!"

With that statement, Heyman attempted to defuse an awkward situation with the insider honesty that has characterized his pro wrestling philosophy since the early-1990s. Before the March 5 edition of *Raw,* Heyman's role in the WWF was unclear at best. Was the WWF trying to recruit him as a writer/booker? Was Heyman angling for the WWF to set up ECW as a developmental affiliate? Had Heyman given up the fight to save ECW?

Heyman's appearance on *Raw* answered some questions. Although it might never have been intended for Heyman to be Lawler's replacement, it became clear that Paul E. didn't mind being a company man for the WWF. Obviously, Heyman enjoyed a closer relationship with the WWF than anyone realized.

It didn't take long for Heyman, who served as a WCW color commentator in the early-'90s, to hit his stride. Behind the scenes, executives hoped Heyman could make some contributions that were as innovative as ECW's hardcore revolution, which directly influenced the WWF's "Attitude" marketing campaign.

Ric Flair forms The Magnificent Seven

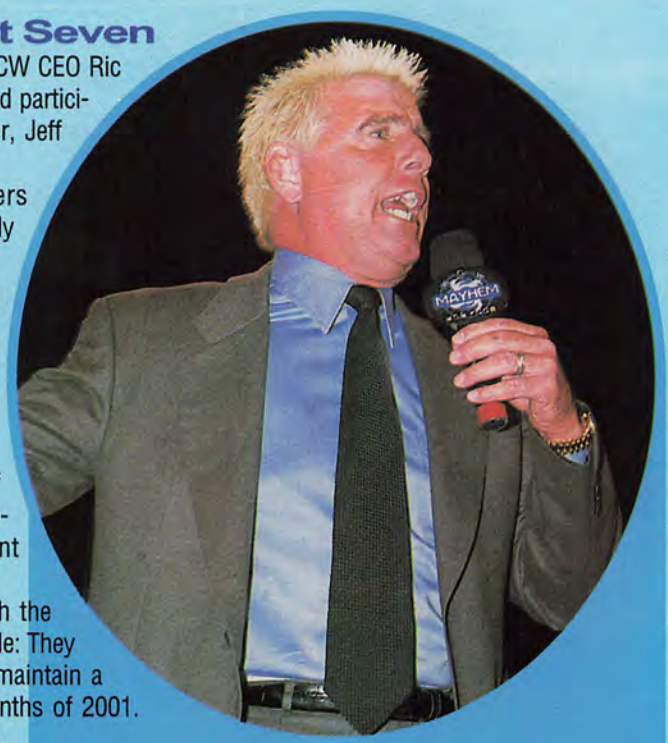
Who would be revealed as the mystery opponent at Sin? WCW CEO Ric Flair claimed a major player, whose identity he kept secret, would participate in a four-way match involving World champ Scott Steiner, Jeff Jarrett, and Sid Vicious.

Accustomed to lackluster WCW surprises, many insiders assumed the mystery opponent was Rick Steiner, who was ready to return following an injury.

The masked man didn't appear until late in the match, just after Sid broke his leg. He stomped Vicious, who was writhing in pain, enabling Scott Steiner to score the victory. Suddenly, the hood was off and Road Warrior Animal stood before the crowd.

Animal turned out to be the lynch pin for the new clique, which grew to include the Steiner brothers, Midajah, Buff Bagwell, Lex Luger, and Jeff Jarrett. Ric Flair, formerly the fan-friendly CEO, used his elite force—dubbed The Magnificent Seven—to bolster his own power base in the company.

The Seven combined The Four Horsemen's team spirit with the NWO's strength in numbers. The group's success was undeniable: They eliminated Bill Goldberg and Kevin Nash and helped Steiner maintain a stranglehold on the WCW World title throughout the early months of 2001. Steiner and Flair couldn't have expected anything better than that.



stories of the half year

WCW relaunch delayed

Even before the WWF purchased WCW, most fans realized the company would be on hiatus for at least a few weeks. Eric Bischoff, still grasping as the Fusient deal slipped through his fingers, advertised the final *Nitro* as a "season finale"—and admitted he had no idea when or if it would find another cable home.

The McMahons sounded more confident after they made the big purchase, estimating WCW might be operational within six weeks. They should have known better. The foundering XFL demanded too much of Vince McMahon's attention. WrestleMania X-Seven was looming. So it was understandable that WCW was on the backburner. And it needed to be done right.

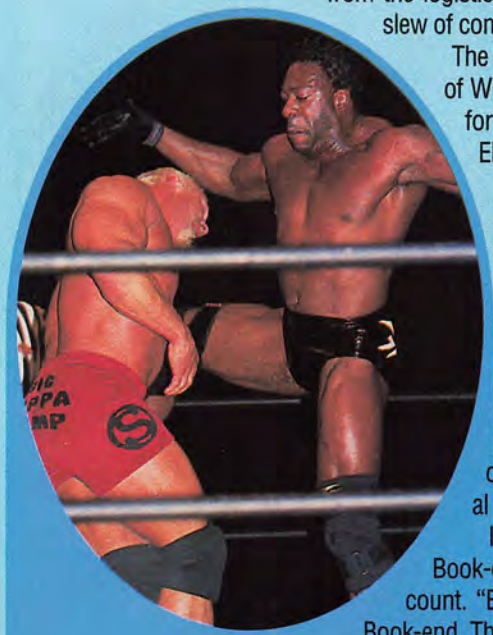
Negotiating a time slot on TNN proved more difficult than expected. Although *Raw* had boosted TNN to an unprecedented number seven in the cable rankings, the network wasn't interested in dedicating a second prime time slot to wrestling. It was willing to consider airing WCW on late-night Saturdays, against NBC's *Saturday Night Live* and Fox's *Mad TV*—both of which cater to the same 18-to-29-year-old demographic group as WCW.

The first show of the McMahon-owned WCW was originally planned for New Jersey in May, but was tentatively rescheduled for June 13 in Fairfax, Virginia. Eventually, the relaunch was pushed back indefinitely.

As the details became sketchier, and following the announcement of a WWF pay-per-view called Invasion in July, some insiders predicted that WCW wouldn't be run as a separate company until early-2002 and that WCW stars would appear on WWF programming until then.

Booker T captures WCW belt at final *Nitro*

The *Night Of Champions* edition of *WCW Monday Nitro* was the toughest two hours of televised wrestling ever produced. Aside from the logistics of the TNT-TNN simulcast featuring Vince and Shane McMahon, there was the slew of complex emotions of wrestlers and even announcers facing uncertain futures.



The booking reflected these dilemmas. Some matches were designed to close a chapter of WCW history, such as Sting's victory over Ric Flair. Others provided a launching pad for the new WCW, such as Billy Kidman and Rey Misterio Jr. defeating Kid Romeo and Elix Skipper for the cruiserweight tag team title.

The WCW World title match between Scott Steiner and Booker T wrapped up WCW in a little bundle with no loose ends. If the McMahons were forced to shelve WCW after all, having the classy Booker T as the last champion would be highly appropriate. If the McMahons really got the company operational again, the Booker-Steiner feud would be a nice bridge between the old WCW and the new WCW.

Then there was the brief yet compelling match itself. Tony Schiavone, who didn't even know if he had a future in wrestling, got caught up in the drama. Schiavone breathlessly referring to Steiner as the "magnificent World heavyweight champion" conveyed the importance of the moment and highlighted the professional effort put forth by "Big Poppa Pump."

It seesawed until the very end. Nearing the five-minute mark, Booker went for the Book-end. The champion blocked it. Steiner executed a Northern Lights suplex for a two-count. "Big Poppa" attempted a power bomb, but Booker escaped and caught him with a Book-end. That time, Booker got the three-count.

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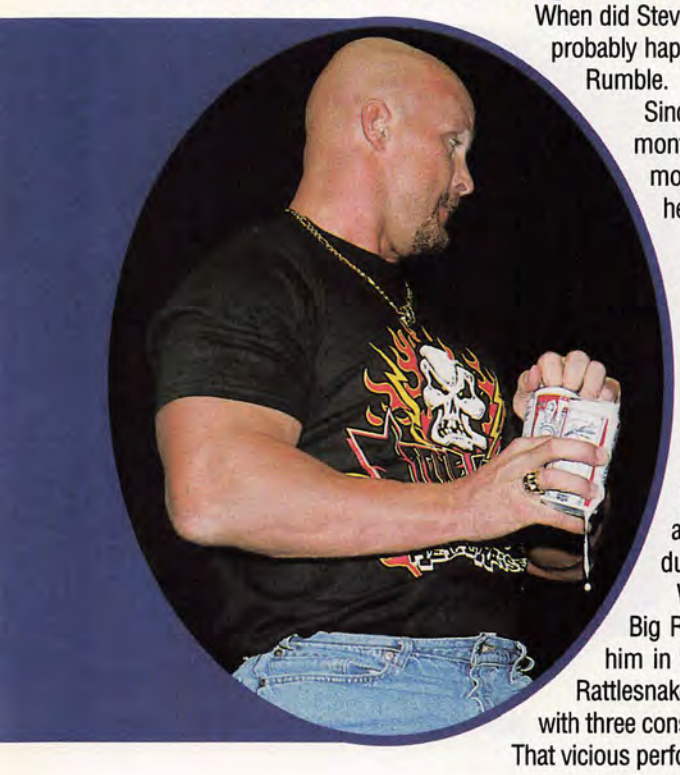
Steve Austin wins Royal Rumble



When did Steve Austin first consider making a clandestine deal with Vince McMahon? It probably happened soon after he dashed the hopes of 29 other stars to win the Royal Rumble.

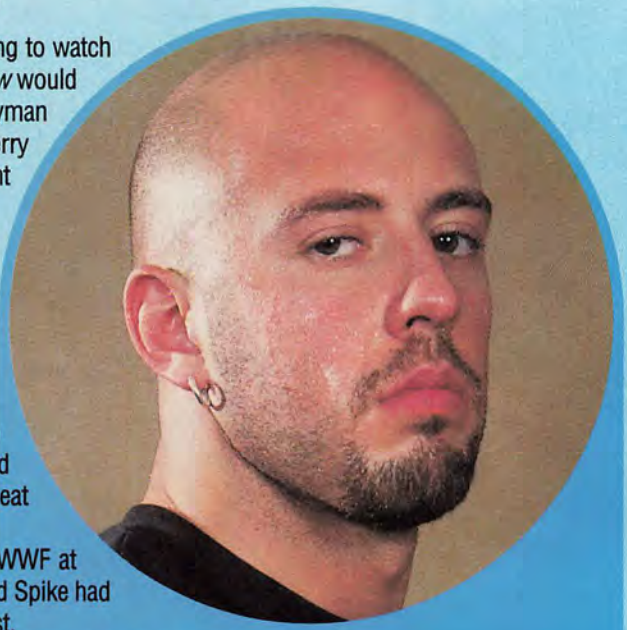
Since "Stone-Cold" returned to full-time action in October, following an 11-month hiatus due to spinal surgery, he had found it difficult to sustain his momentum. Feuds with Rikishi and Triple-H maintained his popularity, but he needed a big boost to reclaim his number-one spot.

The Rumble's final four consisted of Austin, The Rock, Kane, and Billy Gunn. Austin tried to use a stunner on Gunn. No luck. Gunn executed the famouser on Austin. Gunn whipped Austin toward the ropes, but "Stone-Cold" reversed it, sending the eight-time WWF tag champ over the top and to the arena floor.

A bloody Austin locked eyes with The Rock at the 56-minute mark. After a brief slugfest, Austin nailed Rock with a stunner. Then Austin floored Kane with a Thesz press. Rock shook off the stunner and tossed Kane through the second and third ropes at the 58-minute mark. Rock and Austin locked up near the ropes as Kane returned to the ring and dumped both of them over the top. Only Rock's feet hit the ground.

When Austin re-entered the ring, Kane met him with a choke-slam. "The Big Red Machine" tried to smash Austin with a steel chair, but Austin kicked him in the midsection. Kane scooped Austin for a bodyslam, but "The Texas Rattlesnake" slithered behind him and executed a stunner. Austin smashed Kane with three consecutive chair shots before clotheslining him over the top rope for the win. That vicious performance foreshadowed events to come.

Former ECW stars join the WWF



If there were any fans who went into a comatose sleep while trying to watch Vince Russo's brand of crash TV, awakening to a 2001 edition of *Raw* would have led them to demand some explanations. By watching Paul Heyman calling matches involving Justin Credible, Rhyno, Spike Dudley, Jerry Lynn, and Yoshihiro Tajiri, they would have sworn ECW had bought the WWF, instead of the WWF buying WCW.

Former ECW World champion Justin Credible was the first to jump when he signed a three-year contract with the WWF in late-January. Unfortunately, he hasn't gained much traction since being relegated to X-Factor with X-Pac and Albert. Same for Jerry Lynn, who struggled to get TV time after winning the light heavyweight title.

Rhyno and Spike Dudley had more controversial debuts. Rhyno helped Edge and Christian beat The Hardy Boyz for the WWF World tag title on *Raw*. Spike Dudley helped his clan, The Dudley Boyz, beat Edge and Christian for the belts later in the show.

Both ex-ECW stars were making significant contributions to the WWF at press time. Rhyno was a favorite to win the 2001 King of the Ring, and Spike had become involved in a new storyline with Molly Holly as his love interest.

Yoshihiro Tajiri appeared as a manservant for Commissioner William Regal. In Tajiri's debut appearance, Regal told Tajiri not to bow so much because the WWF would "never have stereotypes on its shows." Then Tajiri fetched some tea and crumpets.

stories of the half year

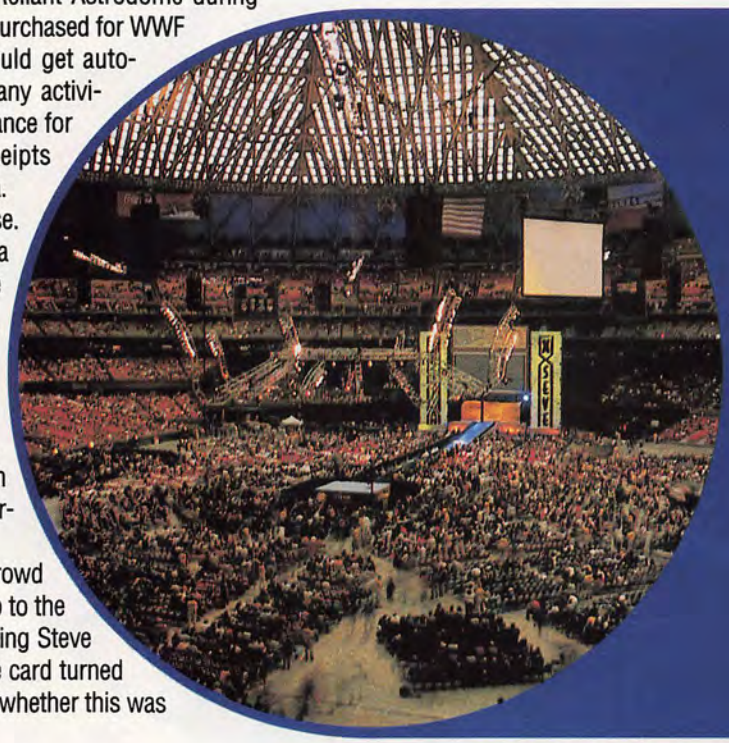
Wrestlemania X-Seven breaks attendance records

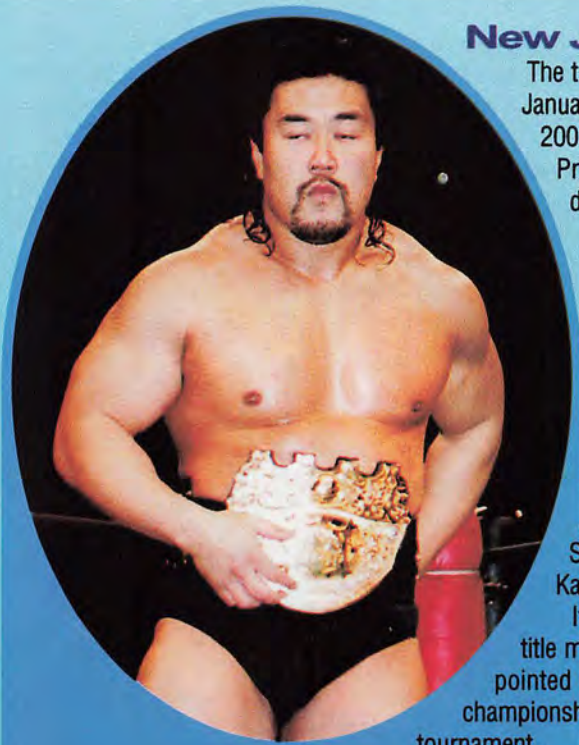
How many people walked through the gates of the Reliant Astrodome during WrestleMania weekend? More than 100,000 tickets were purchased for WWF Axxess—a two-day extravaganza during which fans could get autographs from some of their favorite wrestlers, among many activities—and WrestleMania X-Seven itself. The official attendance for the actual WrestleMania event was 67,295. Gross receipts totaled over $3.5-million, breaking the record for that arena.

The huge turnout in Houston wasn't much of a surprise. More than 52,000 tickets had been sold by December—a full four months before WrestleMania. In addition to the phenomenal merchandising sales at Axxess and 'Mania, one must consider the profit generated by the tremendous number of pay-per-view buys at $39.95 apiece.

WrestleMania X-Seven at the Astrodome attracted the second-largest live crowd in American wrestling history, behind WrestleMania III at the Pontiac Silverdome, which drew 93,173. But WrestleMania III's live gate was considerably less ($1.6-million).

Even better news for the WWF was that this massive crowd witnessed a spectacular WrestleMania. Though the buildup to the show—which featured a much-anticipated main event pitting Steve Austin against The Rock—was disappointing to some, the card turned out to be outstanding. There was even some debate about whether this was the best WrestleMania ever.





New Japan show rocks Tokyo Dome

The thousands of fans who headed into the Tokyo Dome knew the evening of January 4 would be historic. Not only was this the first New Japan show of 2001, but a six-man tournament for the vacant International Wrestling Grand Prix heavyweight championship promised a night of great intrigue and drama.

Many of those in attendance were eager to see the legendary Riki Choshu emerge from retirement once again to battle his arch-nemesis, Shinya Hashimoto, one of the toughest and most dominant Japanese heavyweights of the 1990s. Although *puroresu* enthusiasts tend to appreciate technical ability above all else, it wasn't long before the Choshu-Hashimoto encounter turned into nothing more than a fistfight.

Fortunately, most of those fans disappointed by that violent spectacle were appeased by the six-man tourney. Kensuke Sasaki and Toshiaki Kawada advanced to the finals at the expense of four other New Japan superstars, Yuji Nagata, Masa Chono, Hiroyoshi Tenzan, and Satoshi Kojima. Sasaki reclaimed the belt with a hard-fought victory over Kawada.

It was fitting that he did so, too, for it was Kawada who beat him in a non-title match on October 9 of the previous year. The proud Sasaki was so disappointed with his performance that day that he voluntarily gave up the IWGP championship shortly after that bout, forcing New Japan officials to put together the tournament.

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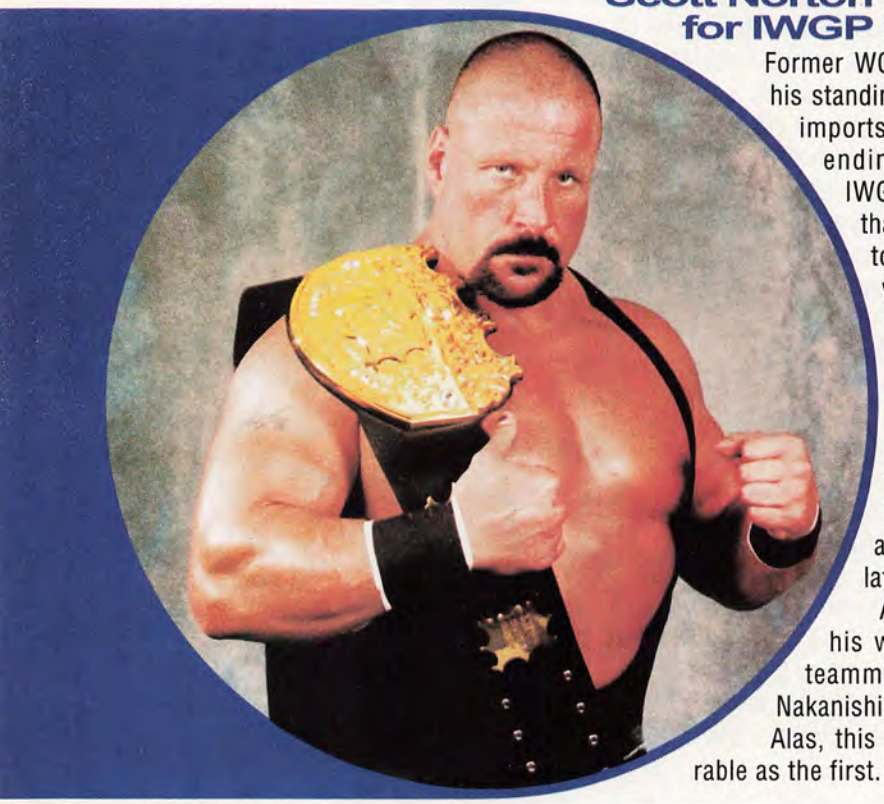
Scott Norton defeats Kensuke Sasaki for IWGP title



Former WCW mid-carder Scott "Flash" Norton solidified his standing as one of the best (and toughest) American imports to compete in New Japan Pro Wrestling by ending Kensuke Sasaki's three-month reign as IWGP titleholder. Norton had been disappointed that he wasn't included in a six-man tournament to fill the vacant title in January, so this victory was particularly sweet for the powerful ex-arm wrestling champ.

The showdown took place on March 17 at the Nagoya Aiichi Prefectural Gym. It began Norton's second reign as IWGP heavyweight champion. He defeated Yuji Nagata for his first IWGP title on September 23, 1998, in Yokohama and lost it to Keiji Muto at the annual Tokyo Dome supercard four months later.

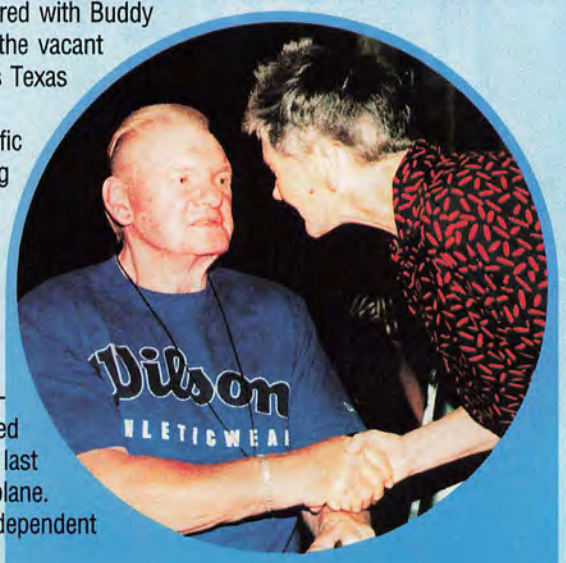
After his March 17 victory, Norton continued his winning streak by teaming with former NWO teammate Scott Hall to defeat Nagata and Manabu Nakanishi the following night in Hyogo.

Alas, this reign did not turn out to be nearly as memorable as the first. It lasted all of 23 days.

Johnny Valentine dies

Although Johnny Valentine hadn't donned the trunks in more than 25 years, he was the most famous wrestler to die in the half-year. A household fall had forced the former NWA U.S. and TV champ to live in a nursing home, where his wife, Sharon, kept an eight-month vigil until his death at age 72 on April 24.

Valentine was a persistent challenger for the NWA, AWA, and WWWF titles throughout the 1960s and early-'70s. One of his first major championships was the WWWF U.S. tag team title, which he captured with Buddy Rogers in 1960. Another highlight was his victory over Harley Race for the vacant Missouri State title in 1973. His toughest feud? That would have to be his Texas slugfests with Fritz Von Erich over the NWA American title.



Asked to talk about his style during an interview in the 1950s, the Pacific Northwest native described it as "scientifically rough." His devastating elbowsmash, dubbed the skullcrusher, epitomized that style.

The veteran's career was tragically cut short on October 4, 1975, when the Cessna 310 in which he was riding crashed into an embankment near New Hanover Airport in Wilmington, North Carolina. Everything at the rear of the plane, including fellow passengers, seats, and baggage slammed into the back of Valentine, who was sitting in the front.

His back was broken in three places, leaving him disabled. The pilot eventually died. Tim Woods, Bob Bruggers, David Crockett, and Ric Flair survived the accident. According to legend, Valentine switched seats with Flair at the last minute because the future world champ was afraid of flying in such a small plane.

Johnny's son, Greg, later became a superstar and currently tours the independent circuit.

stories of the half year

Rock helps *The Mummy Returns* overwhelm box office

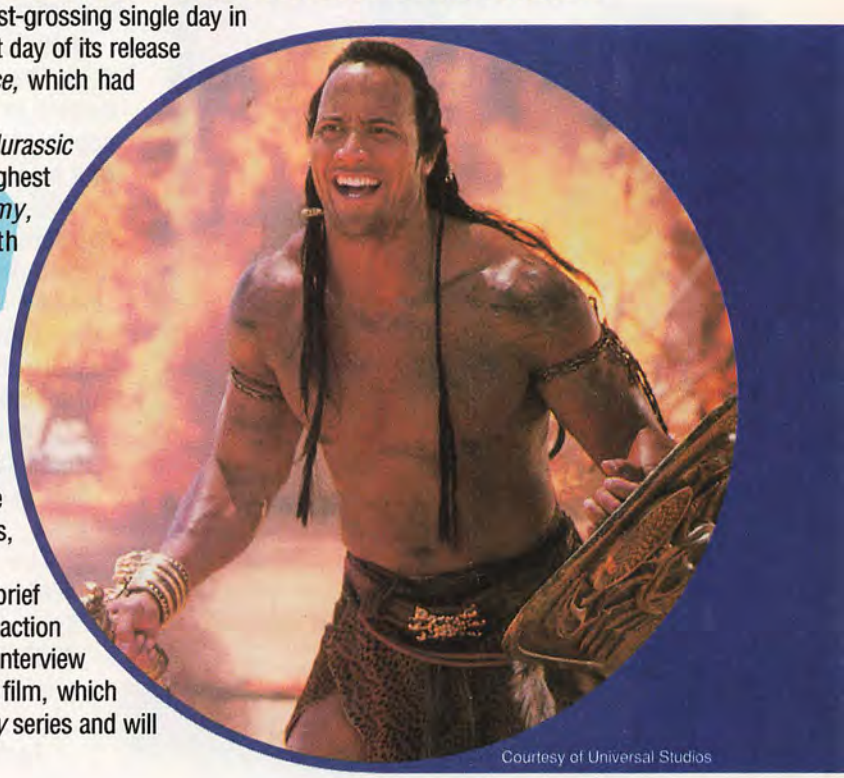
The Mummy Returns broke the record for the highest-grossing single day in movie history. Receipts totaled $28,594,667 on the first day of its release in May. It surpassed *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace,* which had held the record since May 19, 1999.

The movie placed just behind 1997's *Lost World: Jurassic Park* by earning $68,139,035, becoming the second-highest grossing movie in a single weekend. *The Mummy,* released in 1999, placed 20th on that list with $43,369,635.

So what caused these phenomenal numbers? Certainly, a nod must go to leading man Brendan Fraser and the incredible special effects, but most movie critics agree The Rock generated much of the interest.

That's why most reviews came with a warning. "If you want to smell what The Rock is cooking, you'll be disappointed," wrote *Rolling Stone* critic Peter Travers, who clocked The Rock's total screen time at 4:26.

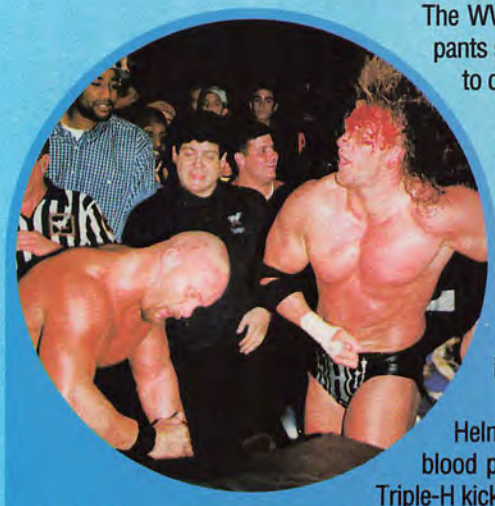
The Rock did earn favorable reviews through his brief performance. He was described as "Hollywood's next action star" in a *Rolling Stone* cover story, which featured an interview with The Rock on the set of *The Scorpion King.* That film, which stars Rock in the title role, is the prequel to the *Mummy* series and will be released next year.



Courtesy of Universal Studios

Triple-H upsets Steve Austin at No Way Out

No Way Out is becoming a great event for Triple-H, who has earned the two most surprising victories of his career at that pre-WrestleMania pay-per-view. Last year, he forced Mick Foley into retirement by defeating him in a "Hell In A Cell" match. In 2001, his best-of-three-falls win over Steve Austin was just as awesome.



The WWF could have staggered the various falls throughout the card to give the participants some rest, but Helmsley and Austin weren't given that luxury. They barely had time to catch their breath before the bell signaled the next fall.

Both men conserved their energy at the outset, keeping the action inside the ring during the first fall. It looked as if Helmsley would escape the stunner when he countered Austin's attempt and shoved him into the turnbuckle. Moments later, Austin came off the ropes and caught him with the stunner for the first pinfall.

Triple-H introduced the sledgehammer, which he had placed under Jim Ross' chair, in the second fall, which was contested under streetfight rules. Austin punched him in the midsection before he could use it, sending the sledgehammer bouncing down the ringside steps. Helmsley retrieved it and hit Austin's face with it, enabling him to score the second pinfall.

Due to a prematch stipulation, the third fall was determined inside a steel cage. Helmsley escalated the violence by raking barbed wire across Austin's face. Austin, with blood pouring, did the same to "The Game." Later, Austin kicked out from the pedigree. Triple-H kicked out from the stunner.

As both men struggled to their feet, Austin grabbed the barbed wire and Helmsley grabbed the sledgehammer. They hit each other simultaneously. As scissors beat paper, in wrestling at least, a sledgehammer beats barbed wire.

Helmsley fell on top of Austin and won the final fall.

MID-YEAR REPORT

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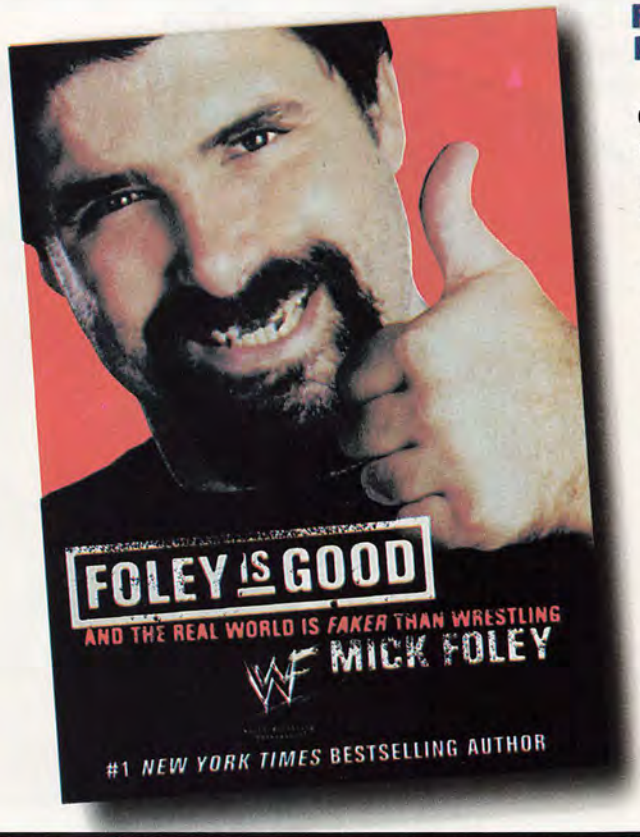

Foley returns to number one on bestseller list

Mick Foley's second book, *Foley Is Good,* reached the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list in May. Fortunately, owners of most bookstores—recalling how they ran out of copies soon after Foley's first book was released—had plentiful stock that enhanced sales for the first several weeks.

While *Have A Nice Day* detailed his laborious climb to the top largely from a humorous perspective, *Foley Is Good* delved deeper into his WWF career (particularly the last 15 months leading up to his retirement), the general state of the industry, and his experiences with the mainstream media. In fact, it was the last item that inspired the tagline of the book: *The Real World Is Faker Than Wrestling.*

Of course, Foley couldn't resist taking shots at his good friend (and favorite whipping boy) Al Snow, as well as Test and members of The Mean Street Posse, in the new book.

The book tour led to several guest appearances, including an interview with Katie Couric on *The Today Show.* Foley fans also got to see their hero more often on WWF TV after the book was released. He made sure to plug it every chance he could and even handed out copies to various WWF stars during backstage skits.

Early response to the book was extremely favorable.

WCW purges diva dressing room

It was the wrestling version of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre (no, not the February 1999 WWF pay-per-view). Five gorgeous WCW divas were lined up and given their pink slips. Maybe it wasn't that perfunctory, but they certainly received their Federal Express packages at right about the same time. The victims on WCW's budget-cutting hit list included Leia Meow, Tygress, Paisley, Major Gunns, and Daffney.

But that wasn't all. The Cat's administrative assistant, Miss Jones, suffered an injury on TV and mysteriously disappeared for a while, only to reappear a few weeks before WCW was sold to the WWF. Tough-as-tack-on-nails interviewer Pamela Paulshock vanished. All of these women joined Torrie Wilson, who was rumored to be receiving $250,000 per year prior to her release, in diva nowhere land.

Life continues, however. Stacy Keibler, who disappeared from WCW TV for several months before returning in March, received word from Shane McMahon that she would have a spot in the new WCW or the WWF. In fact, she was the only WCW diva to have her contract picked up by the WWF after the sale. Tygress and Paisley, along with three other former *Nitro* Girls, formed Diversity 5—a hip-hop song and dance group. Daffney and Major Gunns made a few appearances on the indy circuit.

stories of the half year

The WWF releases Road Dogg

Was it a single incident, or a long line of offenses that caused the WWF to send Road Dogg home? At first, Road Dogg was suspended for unprofessional conduct on an airplane. Road Dogg claims to have been the most surprised when he got word that the WWF had officially released him. It had been widely believed the company was simply giving Road Dogg time to deal with some family problems and substance abuse problems.

WWF sources cited Road Dogg's lack of motivation and poor lifestyle habits as ongoing issues. It was made clear that Road Dogg would have to make major changes if he wanted a shot at regaining his spot. Of course, his star power had been fading fast after a long and successful run as one-half of The New Age Outlaws with Billy Gunn.

Meanwhile, Road Dogg hit the independent circuit throughout the South and Midwest. In addition to making several appearances, he became the first superstar wrestler to post himself on eBay, auctioning two hours of his time to the highest bidder. The bidding went as high as $13,000 before it was discovered that most of the bids were not serious ones and the whole thing was called off.

WOW debuts on pay-per-view

In the boldest attempt at pay-per-view by an independent promoter since the Heroes of Wrestling disaster, the Women of Wrestling promotion made a solid effort to lure fans of wrestling and T & A. Lee Marshall and Bobby Heenan, whose relationship dates back to the AWA, were the broadcast team. The PPV took place on February 4 at the Great Western Forum in Inglewood, California.

The opening bout gave some viewers flashbacks to WOW owner David McLain's last foray into the business, the Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling. Randi Rah Rah (yes, a cheerleader) defeated Jacklyn Hyde in less than three minutes. It seemed the ghost of GLOW had returned.

Even though the show was a financial bust, WOW succeeded in places where GLOW failed. The WOW show consisted of women who were far more athletic, who obviously had more training, and, darn it, the babes just looked better.

The names of the girl grapplers were awful: Harley's Angels, Jungle Grrrl, Wendi Wheels, Roxy Powers, Bronco Billie, Hammerin' Heather, Tanja the Warrior Woman, Jane Blonde, and, yes, there was a farmer's daughter, Becky.

Here's the good side: WOW delivered on its promises. Take the three-way match, for example. The loser was supposed to get her hair shaved. Poison accidentally hit her ally, Ice Cold, with a crutch, enabling Lana Star to score the pin. Ice Cold was not only sat in a barber's chair, but the poor girl was gagged. Before they were through, Ice Cold looked more like "Stone-Cold." In the main event, Thug (the former Peggy Lee Leather) defeated Selina Majors (Bambi, pictured) in a bloody cage match. It was a hard-fought battle, but that was no surprise.

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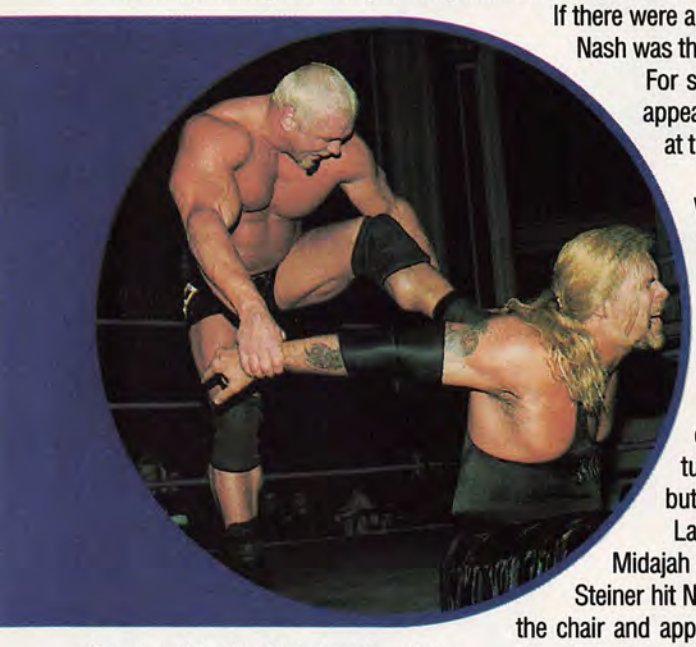
WCW World champion Steiner forces Nash to retire

Kevin Nash became another in a long list of victims driven out of WCW by World champion Scott Steiner. Steiner busted Booker T's sternum at Mayhem. He put Sting back on the injured list. He took credit for breaking Sid Vicious' leg at Sin.



If there were any hope for anyone surviving "Big Poppa Pump," the seven-foot Kevin Nash was the best bet. But Nash agreed to retire if he lost.

For some reason, Steiner and CEO Ric Flair were confident Nash wouldn't appear in time for the match. Flair ordered the referee to begin the 10-count. at that moment, two nurses wheeled in Nash, who had a cast on his leg.

Nash entered the ring, ripped off the cast, and hit Steiner with the World title belt. Nash went for the cover and the referee made the three-count.

"Whoa! Whoa!" interrupted Flair. "Nash, this is a two-out-of-three-falls match. I forgot to say that!"

Defending himself from Nash's onslaught on the floor, Steiner hit "Big Sexy" with his lead pipe. Nash went down, but Steiner couldn't lift the 356-pounder into the ring. After a quick conference with the champ, Flair announced Nash's first pinfall didn't count and he was turning it into a falls-count-anywhere match. Steiner went for the cover, but Nash kicked out.

Late in the match, Nash executed the jackknife and went for the pin. Midajah distracted the referee. Nash forced her down and went for another pin. Steiner hit Nash with a low blow as Flair slid in a chair. Steiner smashed Nash with the chair and applied the Steiner recliner. A second referee dropped Nash's arm three times and declared Steiner the winner.

And Nash went home to collect more paychecks.

The Rock regains WWF World title from Kurt Angle

Did anyone think Kurt Angle had a chance of retaining the WWF championship and meeting Steve Austin at WrestleMania? Very few. Although the result might have been a forgone conclusion, The Rock's victory over Kurt Angle at No Way Out was one of the best matches of the half-year.

Angle dominated Rock with scientific moves and holds. Rock used scientific moves and holds to prove he was in Angle's league. Angle went for the anklelock early. Rock crawled to the ropes and, moments later, applied the sharpshooter. Angle crawled to the ropes. At the five-minute mark, Rock hoisted Angle for a superplex to score only a two-count.

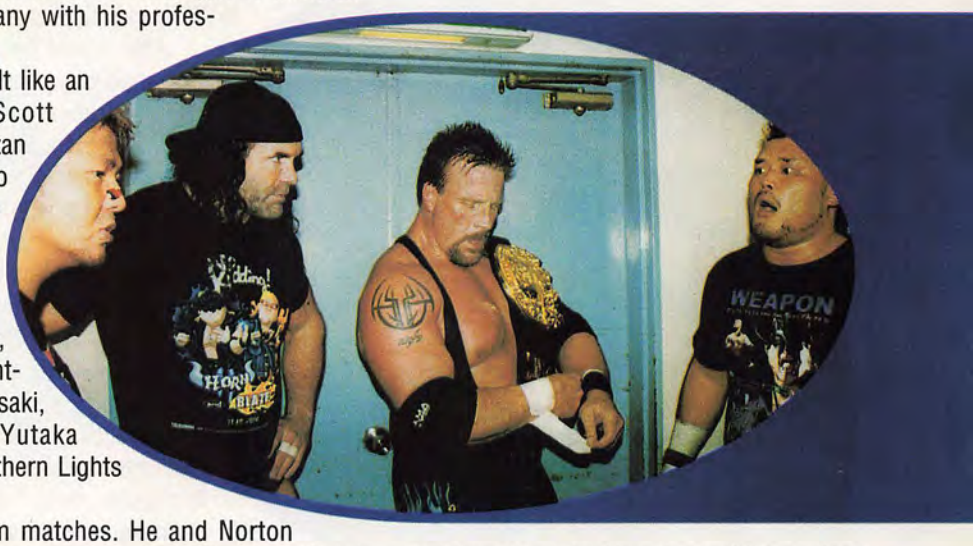
Then it got a little weird. With nearly eight minutes gone in the match, The Big Show arrived and choke-slammed the referee, Angle, and Rock. The people's champion scored a near-fall on the WWF champion.

Angle attempted to hit Rock with the World title belt. The Rock grabbed the strap and hit the Olympian with it. The Rock escaped a devastatingly lengthy anklelock. Angle kicked out from the Rock bottom. He escaped the Rock bottom again and lifted Rock for a thundering Angle slam. Angle kicked out from yet another Rock bottom. Then, after going for the fourth Rock bottom of the match, "The Great One" finally disposed of Angle and became a six-time WWF champ.

stories of the half year

Scott Hall tours Japan

Although it was never stated outright that his three-week Japanese tour in March was designed to showcase Scott Hall on his best behavior, Eric Bischoff (who was still a candidate to take control of WCW at the time) and the McMahons probably tracked his performance very closely. Fortunately, Hall managed to avoid all Tokyo police stations and impressed many with his professionalism.

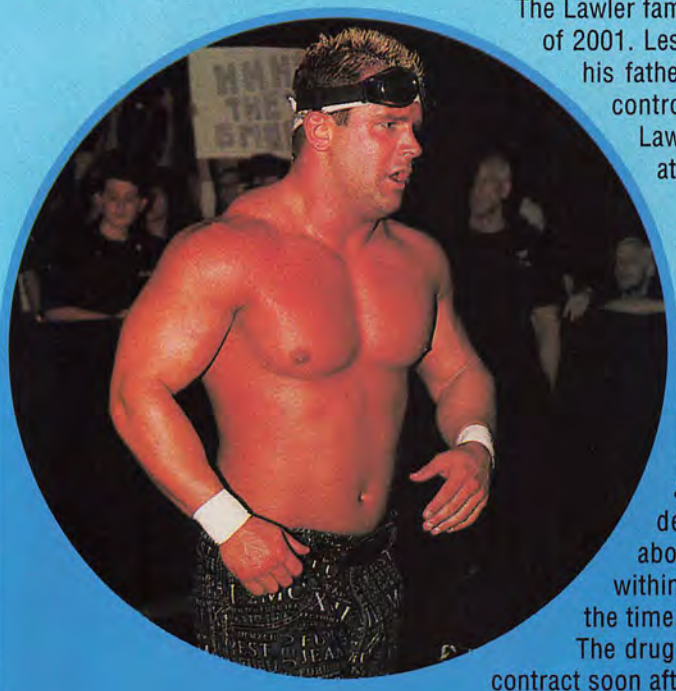


Perhaps Hall was happy because it felt like an NWO reunion, as Hall teamed with Scott Norton, Masa Chono, and Hiroyoshi Tenzan along the way. Chono introduced Hall to the public in simple, yet glowing terms on March 3 in Niigata. "Let me introduce you to my best friend, Scott Hall!" he said. Unfortunately, Hall didn't win the first match in his comeback. He, Norton, Tenzan, and Satoshi Kojima lost an eight-man match to IWGP champ Kensuke Sasaki, Yuji Nagata, Manabu Nakanishi, and Yutaka Yoshie. Sasaki pinned Norton with a Northern Lights bomb at the 18-minute mark.

Most of Hall's outings were tag team matches. He and Norton rebounded to defeat Sasaki and Nagata the following night. They beat Sasaki and Nakanishi at the New Japan 30th anniversary show in Tokyo. With Norton, he won a few and lost a few.

His record was about the same in his two singles matches. He defeated Yoshie on March 9 in Tokyo and ended his tour with a loss to Nakanishi on March 20, also in Tokyo.

Grandmaster Sexay arrested; released by the WWF



The Lawler family didn't have much luck in the WWF during the first half of 2001. Less than two months after Jerry Lawler and Stacy Carter—his father and stepmother (strange as that sounds)—made their controversial exits from the WWF, Grandmaster Sexay (Brian Lawler) was charged with possession of illegal drugs while attempting to cross the U.S. border into Canada.

One night earlier, Sexay co-hosted *Sunday Night Heat* live from WWF New York and was slated to appear for *Raw* at the Saddledome in Calgary, Alberta, that evening. His scheduled match with Steve Blackman and Trish Stratus against Dean Malenko, Perry Saturn, and Terri was changed to Blackman and Trish vs. Perry and Terri.

By all reports, Sexay had been on good terms with WWF management despite the departure of his relatives. A run-in with Commissioner William Regal on *Smackdown* the previous week had given Sexay confidence that a new push was imminent. He even talked about reuniting with his Too Cool partner, Scotty Too Hotty, within a month or so. (Scotty was rehabbing a neck injury at the time.)

The drug possession incident prompted the WWF to terminate his contract soon after he arrived at the arena in Calgary.

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WWF World champ Kurt Angle pins Triple-H

The animosity that began simmering last summer culminated at the Royal Rumble, where Kurt Angle faced Triple-H. Fighting over the hand of Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley was enough to get their blood boiling before, but this was the ultimate high stakes encounter: Angle's WWF World title was at stake.

After a brief feeling-out period, the match reached a higher tempo when Angle flipped Helmsley over the top rope.

Triple-H's strategy became evident upon his return to the ring. He clipped Angle's knees from behind, then stomped and twisted them. "The Game" dusted off an old playbook and applied the Indian deathlock, then the figure-four.

Not only was the champ immobilized, but he would also find it more difficult to stand for the Angle slam.

Trish Stratus, who was in Angle's corner, tried to attack Helmsley as his legs were grapevined in the figure-four. Stephanie yanked Trish out of the ring and pounded her atop the Spanish announcers' table, and both eventually fell into one announcer's lap. Vince McMahon ran to ringside, slung Trish over his shoulder, and began walking to the backstage area, but Stephanie pulled her down. Stephanie and Trish brawled back to the dressing rooms.

But it was Steve Austin's appearance that determined the outcome. While the referee was down, Austin ran out and bloodied Helmsley with the WWF title belt. Then "Stone-Cold" nailed him with a stunner. Angle draped his arm over Helmsley to retain his title.

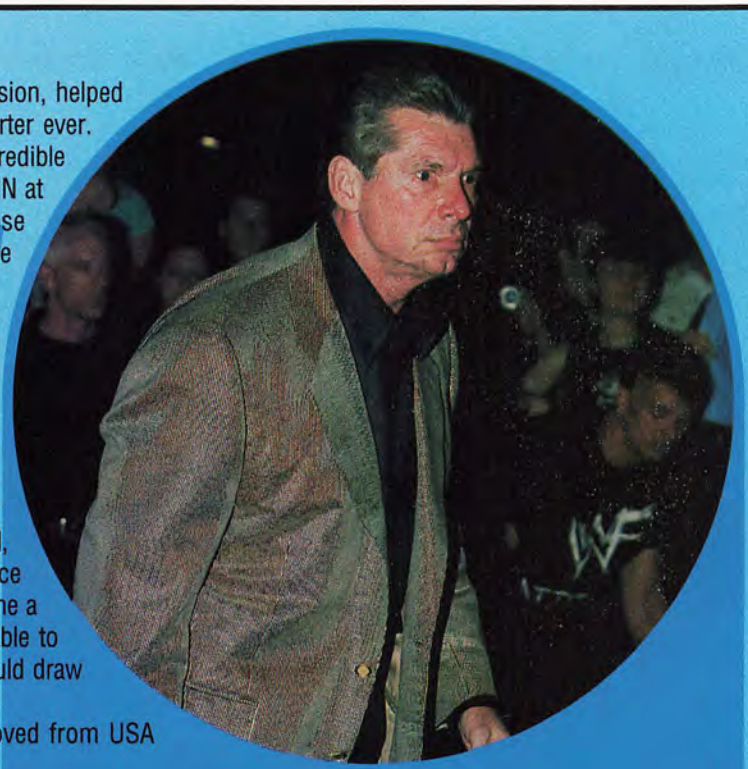
TNN ratings soar

Raw Is War, the top-rated program on cable-television, helped The National Network achieve its most successful quarter ever. Ratings among 18-to-49-year-old viewers rose an incredible 148 percent during the first quarter of 2001, placing TNN at number seven among that demographic group. These strides also helped TNN reach its goal of surpassing the 80 million subscriber mark.

TNN was known as The *Nashville* Network for most of its 18-year history, with concerts, country music talk shows, outdoor programs, and videos comprising a large portion of its schedule. Viacom began diversifying TNN's format a couple of years ago by adding more movies, weekend sports, and, for a while, a little program called *ECW On TNN.*

Star Trek: The Next Generation, scheduled for the fall, is considered a great coup by industry insiders. Vince McMahon is hoping a weekly WCW program will become a major part of TNN's plans. And it would seem reasonable to expect another McMahon-produced wrestling show would draw at least decent ratings.

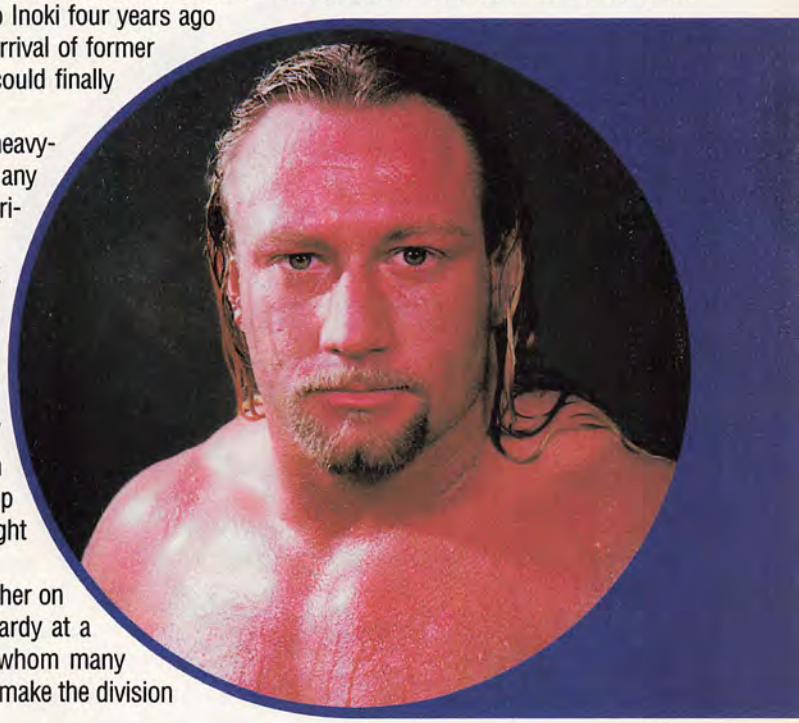
Three WWF programs, most importantly *Raw,* moved from USA Network to TNN in September 2000.



stories of the half year

Lynn captures light heavyweight strap in TV debut

The WWF is ready to give the light heavyweight division a serious push. How often have you heard that one? This is the same company that greeted Taka Michinoku as if he were Antonio Inoki four years ago and now has him doing a silly lip-synching gimmick. The arrival of former ECW World heavyweight champion Jerry Lynn, however, could finally remove the stigma from the light heavyweights.



He has an international reputation for excelling among heavyweights and light heavyweights. He's the first wrestler with any clout, besides Dean Malenko, to take the championship seriously.

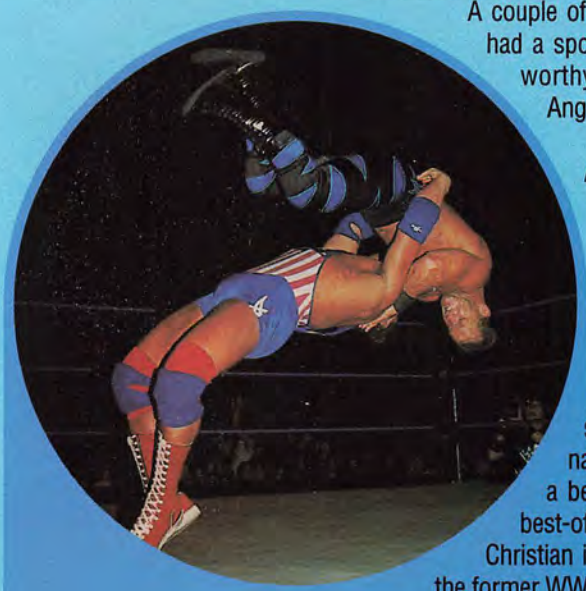
Lynn was probably the first WWF wrestler since Hulk Hogan, who won the WWF title from The Iron Sheik in 1984, to receive a title shot so quickly. In Lynn's, he faced defending champ Crash Holly on *Sunday Night Heat* only minutes before the Backlash pay-per-view began.

Portions of the Chicago crowd chanted *"Jer-ry! Jer-ry!"* as Lynn walked to the ring. He was more aggressive than usual, bending the rules every so often. In fact, he rolled up Holly and held on to his tights to capture the light heavyweight belt.

Unfortunately, most of Lynn's title defenses took place either on *Heat* or on house shows before he lost the gold to Jeff Hardy at a *Smackdown* taping on June 5. Perhaps Lynn and Hardy, whom many fans think is a future main-eventer, will be given a chance to make the division mean something.

Kurt Angle-Chris Benoit feud heats up

"Straight wrestling is boring." "Hardcore is more exciting." Where were those fans as the Kurt Angle-Chris Benoit feud raged for several months, spanning four pay-per-views? Any other four- to six-month feud would have seemed to drag. In the case of Angle-Benoit, fans couldn't get enough.



A couple of weeks before WrestleMania X-Seven, Angle complained that everyone had a spot at the pay-per-view, including The Gobbledygooker. He demanded a worthy opponent. Benoit answered the challenge, claiming that he—not Angle—was the best technical wrestler in the WWF.

Their WrestleMania showdown began as an amateur-style encounter as Angle pitted his skills against the hard-nosed, face-in-the-mat tactics that Benoit learned in Stu Hart's Dungeon. Angle soon became very aggressive and eventually caught Benoit in an inside cradle for the victory.

The war didn't end there. They battled in a 30-minute "Ironman" match at Backlash. The two were tied 3-3 when Angle trapped Benoit in an anklelock. Benoit refused to submit as time expired. The bout went into overtime. Benoit won with the Crippler crossface.

Because Angle whined so much the following night on *Raw,* Benoit stole his gold medals to give him something to cry about. Benoit dominated Angle at the U.K.'s Insurrextion by beating him in two straight falls in a best-of-three falls match. Two weeks later at Judgment Day, in another best-of-three falls encounter, Benoit and Angle split the first two falls. Edge and Christian interfered on Angle's behalf in the third fall (ladder match rules), giving the former WWF champ a chance to grab his medals.

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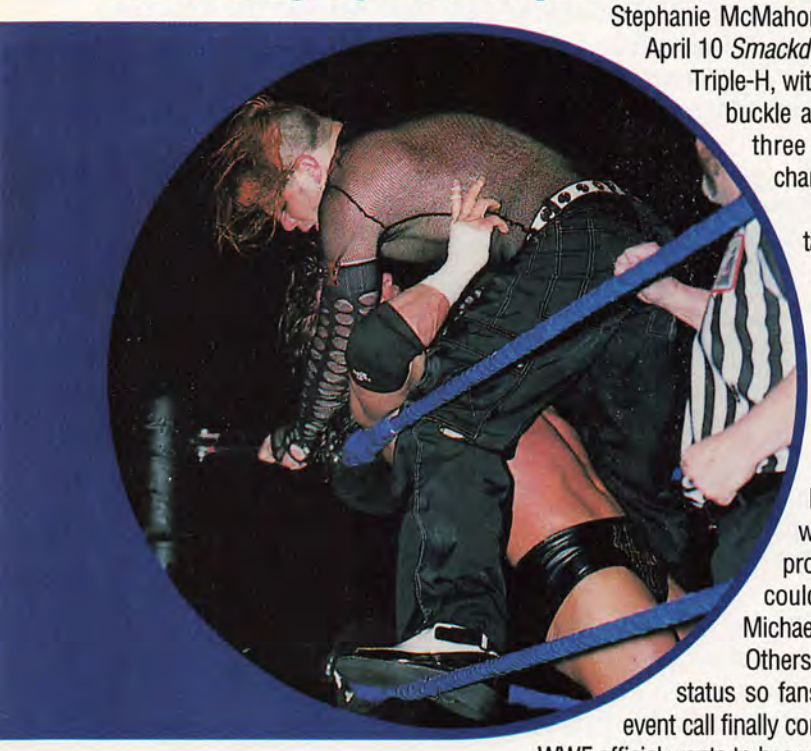
Jeff Hardy upsets Triple-H for I-C title



Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley watched a backstage monitor in horror at the April 10 *Smackdown* as Matt Hardy ran into the ring and nailed her husband, Triple-H, with a vicious chair shot. Jeff Hardy scampered to the top turnbuckle and flattened "The Game" with a swanton bomb. Roughly three seconds later, Jeff Hardy was the new Intercontinental champion.

Maybe someone in the Hardy family was smart enough to take some Polaroids of Jeff wearing the gold. Six days later, it was gone.

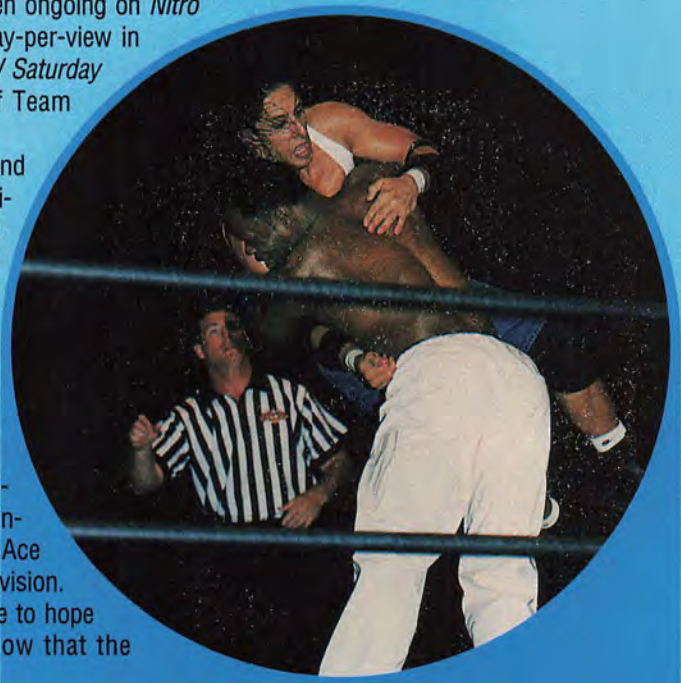
On the April 16 edition of *Raw,* it was Matt who was watching the backstage monitor. Steve Austin attacked him, which lured Lita toward the entranceway. Austin chased her back to ringside. Meanwhile, Triple-H capitalized on all the diversions and planted Jeff with the pedigree.

What was the purpose of this six-day wonder? Loyal Hardy Boyz fans blasted Vince McMahon, insisting that it was all part of the WWF chairman's infamous humbling process. If the I-C title reign had been longer, they argued, Jeff could have been transformed into a main-eventer, like Shawn Michaels.

Others suggested the WWF was letting Jeff flirt with main-event status so fans could become accustomed to the idea. When that main-event call finally comes, the public will be more likely to accept him. After all, no WWF official wants to hear chants of "Die, Jeff, die!"

Romeo and Skipper win cruiserweight tag title tourney

The WCW cruiserweight tag team title tournament had been ongoing on *Nitro* and *Thunder* for several weeks, culminating at the Greed pay-per-view in March. Kid Romeo, best known for his appearances on *WCW Saturday Night,* and Elix Skipper, best known for being the runt of Team Canada, surprised everyone by advancing to the finals.



They faced the more experienced team of Billy Kidman and Rey Misterio Jr. (who are former WCW World tag team champions), two men with eight cruiserweight singles title reigns between them. It was aerial warfare from the outset, but ended near the 14-minute mark when Romeo caught Misterio with the last kiss, a variation of the X-factor.

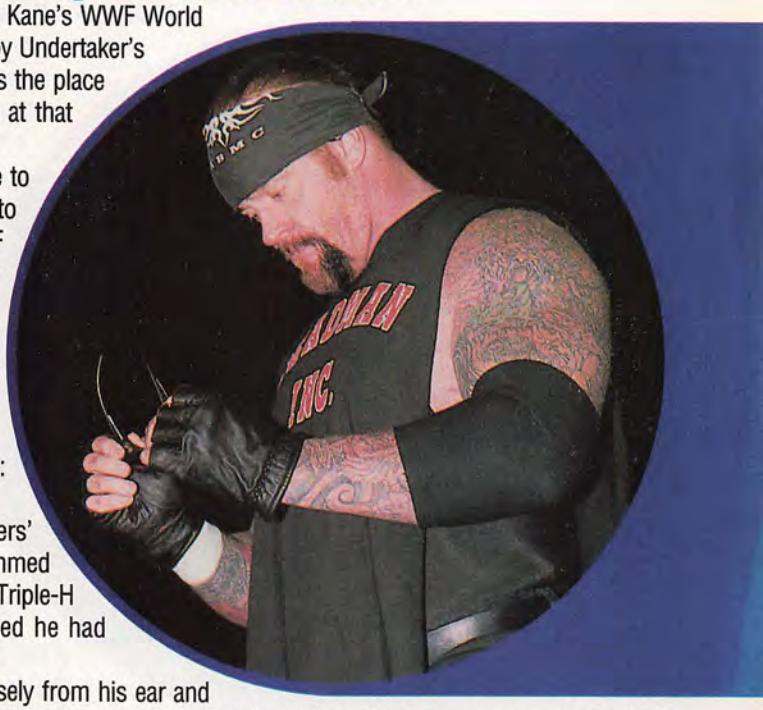
The attempt to establish a cruiserweight tag team championship was undoubtedly inspired by the various junior heavyweight tag team titles recognized in Japan over the years. Eric Bischoff and Johnny Ace, who had enormous influence in early-2001, also recognized that the cruiserweight singles division helped WCW differentiate itself from the WWF at the beginning of the Monday night war. Undoubtedly, Bischoff and Ace hoped to recreate that magic with the cruiserweight tag team division.

Smaller WCW wrestlers such as Misterio and Kidman have to hope that the push of the cruiserweight division continues now that the McMahons have purchased WCW.

stories of the half year

Undertaker beats Austin, Helmsley at Insurrextion

For Deadman Inc. fans disappointed by The Undertaker and Kane's WWF World tag team title loss to Steve Austin and Triple-H and depressed by Undertaker's loss to Austin at Judgment Day, the Earl's Court in London was the place to be on May 5. The Undertaker made a lot of people famous at that U.K.-only pay-per-view.



Kane, who had been scheduled to face Triple-H, was unable to compete due to an injured arm. Instead, Undertaker consented to a handicap match pitting only him against Triple-H and WWF World champ Steve Austin. If 'Taker pinned Austin or made him submit, he would be awarded the title.

In the early minutes, Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley distracted the referee as Austin hit Undertaker with a chair. 'Taker kicked out. The "Two-Man Power Trip" braced themselves for a long night.

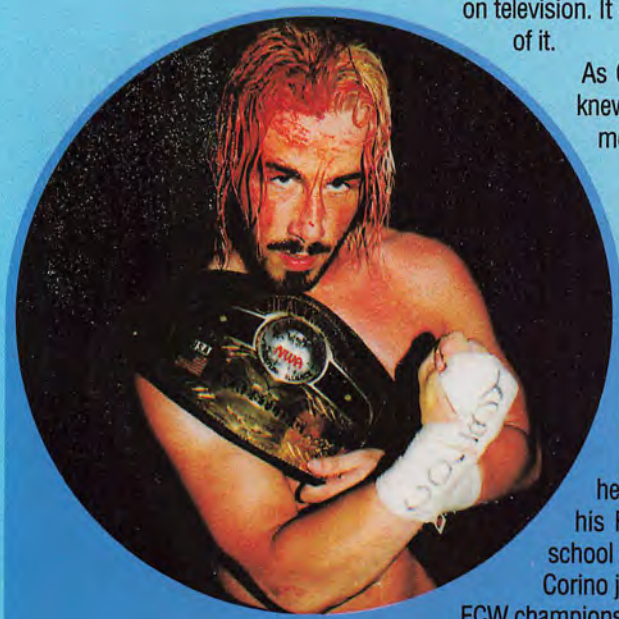
The rest of the match could be summarized by one word: "Choke-slam-mania."

Undertaker choke-slammed Triple-H through the announcers' table. When Vince McMahon entered the ring, 'Taker choke-slammed him, too. Then he choke-slammed Austin. He choke-slammed Triple-H again to score the pinfall. It was too late when 'Taker realized he had passed on the opportunity to pin Austin and take the World title.

At the end of the match, the battered Undertaker bled profusely from his ear and had difficulty regaining his balance. After he finally gained his equilibrium, he rode his motorcycle to the entranceway and raised his arm triumphantly.

Steve Corino beats Mike Rapada for NWA title

His quest to become NWA champion began long before his title match against Mike Rapada in Tampa. Steve Corino dreamed of that moment as he watched his heroes, men like Ric Flair and Dusty Rhodes, battle for supremacy on television. It became his childhood obsession and, eventually, he made a career out of it.



As Corino charted a new course for his career in the spring of 2001, he knew climbing to the top of the NWA wouldn't be easy—not even for a former ECW World champion. He needed a steppingstone.

That's why Corino was in Fort Worth, Texas, on April 13. The vacant NWA North American title was at stake. Redd Dogg Begnaud was a worthy opponent for the "King Of Old School." But Corino won the match at the 13-minute mark and earned his steppingstone.

After dropping the North American strap, Corino received his shot against NWA champion Mike Rapada on April 25. Former WCW ring announcer David Penzer added luster to the event, but it was the participants—Rapada and Corino—who rocked the Fort Hesterly Armory that night.

Rapada was more aggressive than usual, peppering Corino's forehead with fists until it bled. After 22 minutes of action, Rapada attempted his Rocky Mountain flattop finisher, but Corino countered with the old school expulsion. Special referee Bill Alfonso made the three-count.

Corino joined Sabu and Terry Funk as the only men to hold both the NWA and ECW championships.

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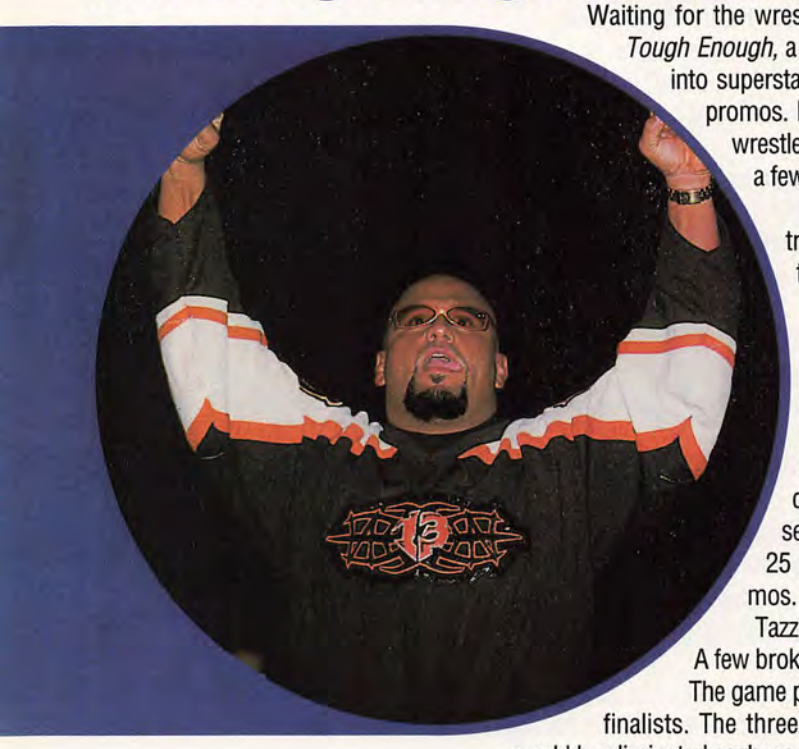
MTV'S *Tough Enough* conducts tryouts



Waiting for the wrestling version of *The Real World?* MTV is delivering with *Tough Enough,* a show featuring WWF instructors trying to turn regular fans into superstars. But the gutsy hopefuls had to do more than give good promos. Intense training is the number-one element for a successful wrestler, and MTV wanted to share the grunts, groans, and maybe a few tears with its audience.

Modeled after *The Making Of A Band,* which documents the trials and tribulations of wannabe pop stars, *Tough Enough* traces the busts and breaks of 13 contestants, a la *Survivor.*

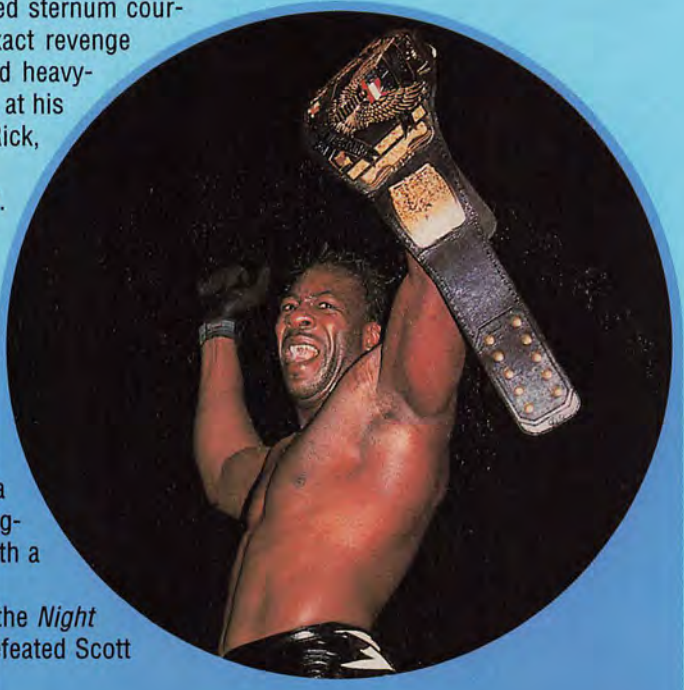
Tazz and Al Snow, both of whom have operated wrestling schools, were the primary instructors. Jacquelyn played a key role in molding the female participants.

Out of 5,000 people who sent videotapes, only 230 were invited to tryouts held in New York. During two grueling 14-hour days, Tazz, Snow, Jacquelyn, and *Tough Enough* producers narrowed the field to 40 through rigorous training sessions. The contestants, all of whom were between 18 and 25 years old, participated in fitness tests and attempted promos.

Tazz and Jacquelyn, in particular, weren't kind to the participants. A few broke down crying.

The game plan for the show was to narrow the contestants down to two finalists. The three trainers and primary producer were then to decide who would be eliminated each week. The winner was to receive a WWF contract and a prize.

Booker T defeats Rick Steiner for U.S. gold



As Booker T convalesced at home because of an injured sternum courtesy of Scott Steiner, he knew it wouldn't be easy to exact revenge against "Big Poppa Pump." Not only did the WCW World heavyweight champion have the entire Magnificent Seven clique at his disposal at all times, but he also had his older brother, Rick, protecting his flank whenever he needed him to be there.

The Steiners had never been so dominant in WCW. Scott was the World champion and Rick was the U.S. champ. Booker knew he had to go through one brother to get the other.

Step one of Booker's comeback plan occurred at the Greed pay-per-view in March, where he challenged Rick Steiner for the U.S. title. Steiner mustered only two chinlocks in his half-hearted offense.

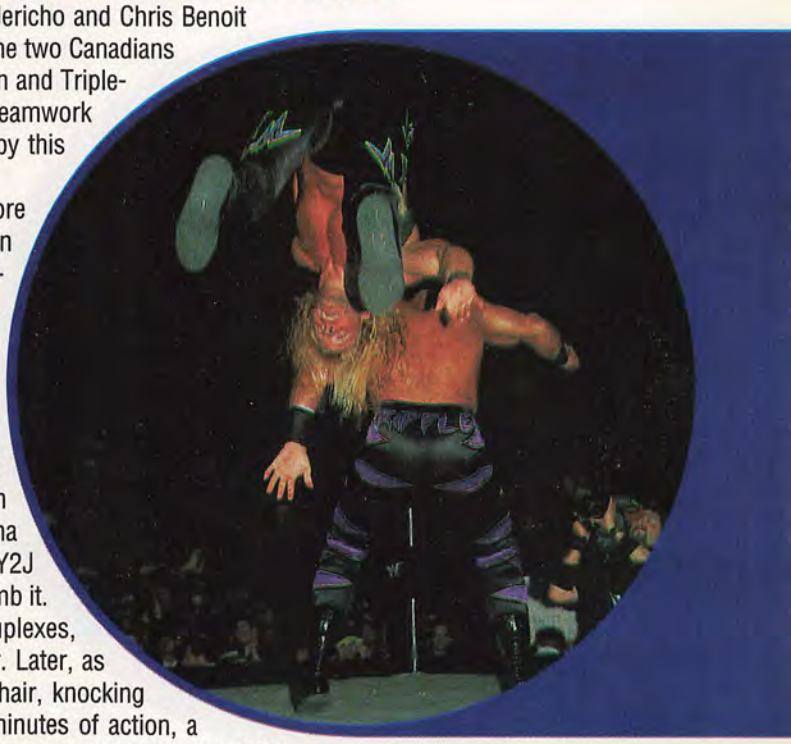
But Booker didn't win on his own. Near the seven-minute mark, former U.S. champ Shane Douglas—with a cast on his arm—ran into the ring and waylaid the "Dog-faced Gremlin." Booker followed up by flooring Steiner with a Book-end for the pinfall.

Step two of Booker's plan occurred eight days later at the *Night Of Champions* edition of *WCW Monday Nitro.* There he defeated Scott Steiner for the World title on the show's final telecast.

stories of the half year

Jericho beats Benoit for I-C title in ladder match

Judging from the violent ladder match between Chris Jericho and Chris Benoit at the Royal Rumble, it would have been hard to imagine the two Canadians collaborating to defeat two elite superstars like Steve Austin and Triple-H for the WWF World tag title. But it happened, and their teamwork might have stemmed from the mutual respect generated by this match.



Intercontinental champ Benoit and challenger Jericho tore into each other immediately. There wasn't much strategy in this encounter—just pure, reflexive instinct. Benoit scampered up the ladder as early as the three-minute mark, but was knocked off by Jericho. Benoit attempted a high-risk move by diving through the ropes toward Jericho on the arena floor. Y2J used a chair to shoot him down.

Jericho was effective at using the ladder as a weapon. He intertwined Benoit's legs in the rungs of the ladder. He whipped Benoit face-first into it. He balanced the ladder on the top rope, jumped on the side teetering toward the arena floor, catapulting the in-ring portion into Benoit's chin. Y2J even placed the ladder on top of Benoit in an attempt to climb it.

Benoit countered these creative uses with German suplexes, suplexes off the ladder, and outright shoves off the ladder. Later, as both men climbed the ladder, Jericho hit Benoit with a chair, knocking the champion onto the ropes and to the floor. After 18 minutes of action, a fatigued Jericho reached for the belt and fell back to the canvas to win his fourth I-C title.

WMC cancels Power Pro Wrestling

A Memphis tradition ended when WMC-TV decided not to renew its contract with Power Pro Wrestling. For 34 years, live wrestling on Saturday morning had survived through several incarnations, including the old Mid-Southern territory, the Championship Wrestling Association, the United States Wrestling Association, and, most recently, Power Pro. Insurance liability and overall financial issues were reasons for WMC's decision.

But this doesn't mean wrestling has become unpopular. The station began airing *The Best Of Memphis Wrestling* on April 21 and scored higher ratings than the live show. The program is more than recycled footage, however, because in-studio guests typically include Jerry Lawler, Lance Russell, and other Memphis mainstays. Legends such as Terry Funk often call the program.

It seemed almost appropriate that Lawler, the most prominent wrestler in Memphis history, was a central figure in Power Pro's controversial shutdown. According to sources, the WWF threatened to cancel its developmental deal with the promotion if owner Randy Hales went through with his plans to book Lawler on the program. Hales rejected the ultimatum, so the WWF terminated its agreement with Power Pro.

Insiders suggest the WWF's withdrawal was not a significant factor in WMC's decision. Rumors persist that former Power Pro announcers Dave Brown, the station's weatherman, and Cory Macklin are trying to form their own promotion in conjunction with WMC.

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the biggest stories of the half year

Sid Vicious breaks his leg in grisly fashion

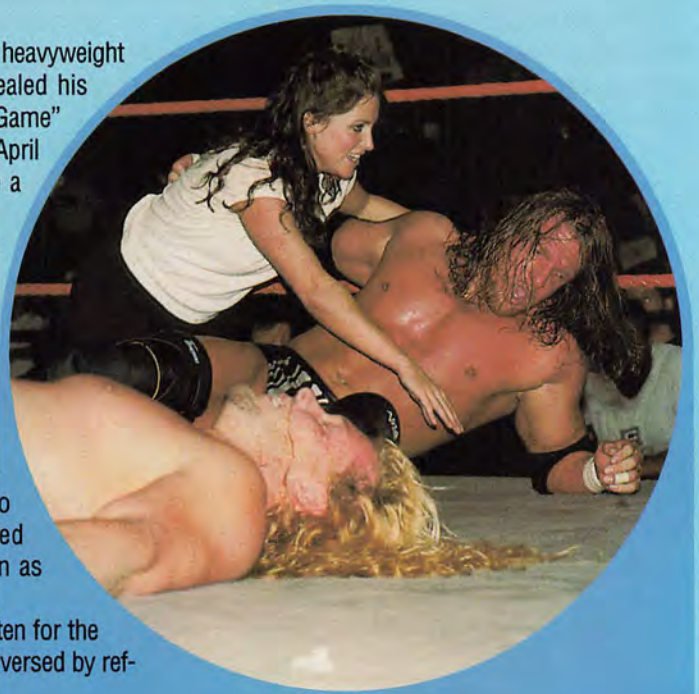
Most wrestling fans don't mind the sight of blood. Most cheer when they see someone put through a table. But virtually everyone who saw replays of what happened to Sid Vicious at Sin on January 14 cringed at least a bit.

Sid didn't seem to be taking a risk when he jumped off the middle turnbuckle in an effort to kick Scott Steiner during the PPV's four-way main event. Unfortunately, he landed awkwardly and his left leg simply snapped. Both his fibula and tibia were broken, as the leg ended up bending sideways at a 45 degree angle. Those watching Sin didn't know what happened to Sid, because just before the gruesome scene unfolded, cameras cut to the backstage area, where Ric Flair and his mystery man (Road Warrior Animal, who was to be the fourth participant) were preparing to make their way to the ring.

When cameras cut back to the ring, Sid was laying on the mat. Shortly thereafter, Steiner pinned him. The injury required two hours of surgery, during which a 43-inch rod was inserted in the leg.

It wasn't until the following night on *Nitro* that the disturbing footage was shown—repeatedly. Though Tony Schiavone warned viewers about the graphic nature of the clip, WCW was still criticized for airing it. And though he had nothing to do with the injury, Scott Steiner took credit for putting Sid on the injured list.

Triple-H beats Chris Jericho for Intercontinental title



"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin had captured the WWF World heavyweight title at WrestleMania X-Seven on April 1, and Triple-H revealed his alliance with Austin on April 2, so the pressure was on "The Game" when he challenged Intercontinental champ Chris Jericho on April 3. The "Two-Man Power Trip" was determined not to waste a single day in their quest to control the federation.

Helmsley could feel his ambitious plans slipping away as Y2J reared back on the Walls of Jericho. Because the referee was down at the time, WWF Commissioner William Regal tried to help Triple-H. Jericho released the hold and attacked the commish.

Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley tried to intervene on behalf of her husband, but she was the next to be trapped in the Walls of Jericho. With the champion in a very vulnerable position, Triple-H smacked his head with a steel chair. Jericho somehow kicked out of the pin attempt. Helmsley ended Jericho's resistance with a pedigree to begin his third reign as Intercontinental champion.

It was sweet revenge for Triple-H, who was seemingly beaten for the WWF World title by Jericho in 2000, only to get the decision reversed by referee Earl Hebner less than an hour later.

stories of the half year

Ohio Valley presents Christmas Chaos

Ever hear of Christmas in January? Ohio Valley Wrestling's present to its fans was worth the wait this year, as Steve Austin, Kane, Chris Benoit, The Hardy Boyz, and Lita made significant impacts at Christmas Chaos. The show, which was originally scheduled for December, had to be postponed until January 31 because of inclement weather.

The Ohio Valley wrestlers weren't intimidated by the WWF superstars. Local star Rico Constantino (pictured) had the audacity to interrupt Steve Austin as Jim Ross interviewed him. No problem. Austin gave Constantino a stunner and drank a few beers with good ol' J.R.

Fans were especially happy to see Constantino get his comeuppance because his interference spoiled OVW champion Nick Dinsmore's chances of pinning Chris Benoit, who was managed by Louisville's least favorite son, Jim Cornette. Dinsmore was awarded the disqualification victory.

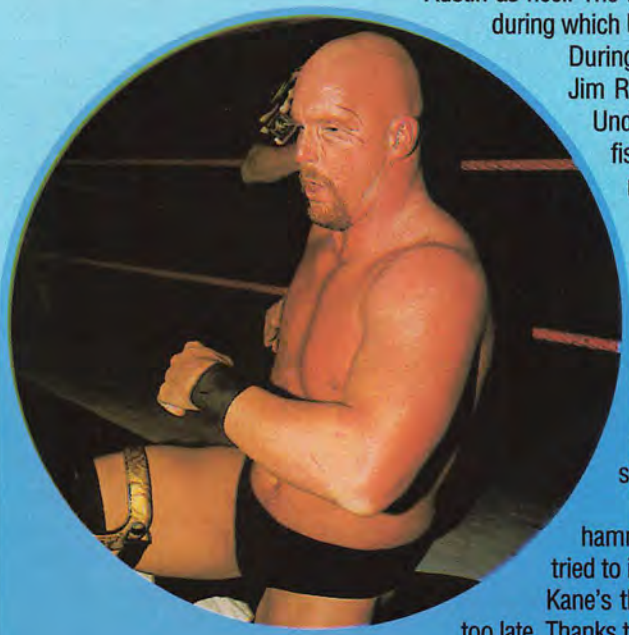
Kane dominated Leviathan to win the main event. In a battle of WWF exiles, The Big Show pinned Mark Henry. Third-generation star Randy Orton, grandson of Bob Orton Sr. and son of Bob Orton Jr., defeated Robbie D.

Also on the show, Constantino and Mr. Black lost to Flash Flanagan and Trailer Park Trash, The Hardy Boyz and Lita defeated The Disciples of Synn, seven-foot Russ McCullough beat Damaja, The Suicide Blonds defeated Sean Casey, Buddy Landell, and Chris Michaels, and Rob Conway beat Ron Waterman.

WWF officials kept a close eye on Shelton Benjamin and Brock Lesnar, who are considered OVW's top two prospects. They defeated Sly Skraper and Johnny Spade in the opener.

WWF World champ Steve Austin pins The Undertaker

Steve Austin vs. The Undertaker is nothing new to the WWF, but the main event at Judgment Day presented a fresh dynamic: Austin as heel. The match itself, in terms of style, was a throwback to their 1999 wars, during which Undertaker was fending off Austin on behalf of Vince McMahon.



During this encounter, McMahon did color commentary at ringside with Jim Ross and Paul Heyman. He panicked in the opening minutes as The Undertaker repeatedly slugged Austin in the aisle. Austin made a fist-for-fist comeback and the match didn't slow down until the nine-minute mark, when "Stone-Cold" grounded 'Taker with a leglock for a couple of minutes.

As soon as Undertaker escaped, he took the action to where he fares best—outside the ring. As the "American Badass" positioned Austin near the English-speaking announcers' table, Heyman tried frantically to redirect him toward the Spanish announcers' table.

Once the action returned to the ring, however, Austin scored four near-falls. At the 21-minute mark, a weary Undertaker summoned his last burst of energy to choke-slam Austin. He then took a shortcut with some vicious chair shots.

Triple-H, Austin's partner in crime, ran into the ring with a sledgehammer. Undertaker knocked him down and decked McMahon when he tried to intervene.

Kane's theme played as he ran to the ring, but "The Big Red Machine" was too late. Thanks to all the interference, Austin scored the pinfall.

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the biggest stories of the half year

Jesse Ventura's XFL stint causes controversy in Minnesota

Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura's promise to encourage bipartisanship in Minnesota was all too effective in early-2001. Republicans, Democrats, and even members of Ventura's own brainchild, the Independence Party, united to criticize his XFL deal.

The Minnesota Department of Employee Relations had confirmed it was legal for Ventura to become an XFL color commentator because he is, technically, an elected official and not a state employee.

The Minnesota legislature's State Government Finance Committee held a three-hour hearing concerning the matter. Rep. Phil Krinkie, the Republican chairman of the committee, planned to introduce legislation making it illegal for a governor to accept outside employment. Said Krinkie: "We should not have a governor who is out moonlighting."

Ventura did make efforts to protect himself and his office in the XFL contract. For example, Ventura could have been freed of the contract if any authoritative agency or court ruled he was breaking the law. He was given "reasonable sole discretion" to cancel his XFL appearances if they conflicted with his duties as governor. The XFL was forbidden to use Ventura's title of governor or refer to his office in promotional material and banned from political lobbying in Minnesota. In addition, the XFL confirmed it wasn't subject to regulation by the state's executive branch.

At least Ventura won't have to worry about any of this next year.

The Harts relaunch Stampede wrestling

After remaining dormant for nearly a decade, Stampede Wrestling geared up to re-establish itself as the premier promotion in Western Canada. For more than 40 years, Stampede had been home to countless veterans and the showcase for graduates of Stu Hart's Dungeon and the Hart Brothers Wrestling Academy. Chris Benoit, Chris Jericho, Lance Storm, Jushin Liger, and Brian Pillman—in addition to the famous Hart brothers—are among those who trace their roots there.

Stu Hart founded the promotion in 1948, but shut it down when the WWF began promoting shows in the region. Bruce Hart spearheaded the effort to reopen the business in 1999, but the death of younger brother Owen on May 23 of that year contributed to another shutdown.

"We weren't sure we could ever promote wrestling again," said Bruce. "This business had taken a lot from our family. Now it had taken my brother."

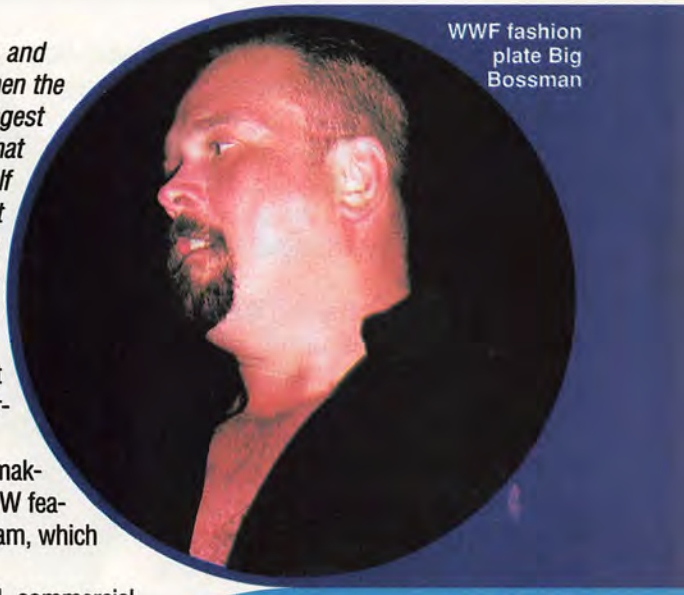
Ellie, Bruce's sister, agreed with that sentiment. "It felt as if the tide was turning against us. There was a lot of grief and apathy and, for a long time, I think we questioned if the passion to do this would return," she added.

They resumed operations five months later, only to have a rival Calgary promotion hire most of their training school graduates. Bruce decided to do a third relaunch early this year and hopes to re-establish a working relationship with the WWF. He has also renewed his in-ring career, making him the only active Hart brother at this time.

the wacky & weird

the wacky and weird

PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING LENDS itself to the bizarre and curious. Beginning with its days as a carnival attraction, when the bearded lady could be found throttling the world's strongest man, wrestling has been besieged with situations and personalities that would never be found in what we like to call the real world. The first half of 2001 was no different. Over the next three pages, you'll read about things that stuck out as peculiar in the world of professional wrestling over that time. Be prepared for the strange and the outlandish, the outrageous and the ridiculous, the silly and the sublime. Be prepared for the worst.

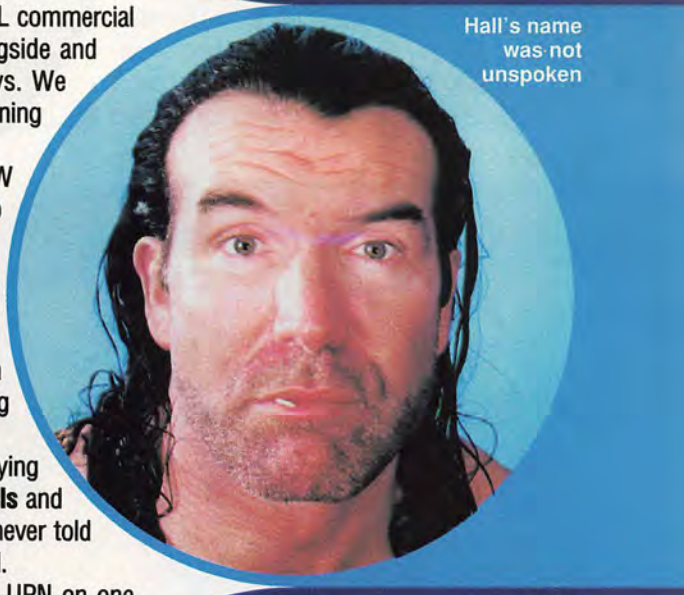


WWF fashion plate Big Bossman

•*Playboy* asks two WWF wrestlers about their sense of style. The first is **Triple-H**. The second? Why that would be cutting-edge fashion maverick **Big Bossman**.

•Only weeks after firing WCW color commentator **Mark Madden** for making unauthorized comments about **Scott Hall** (among other things), WCW features Hall in a match against **Sid Vicious** in its *Best Of Nitro 2001* program, which aired only in international markets.

•On an episode of *Smackdown,* **Vince McMahon** sandwiches an XFL commercial between segments featuring players from the Oakland Raiders at ringside and **Edge** and **Christian** wearing Raiders, then Baltimore Ravens jerseys. We thought the NFL was supposed to be for panty-waists, thus the reasoning behind the creation of the XFL.



Hall's name was not unspoken

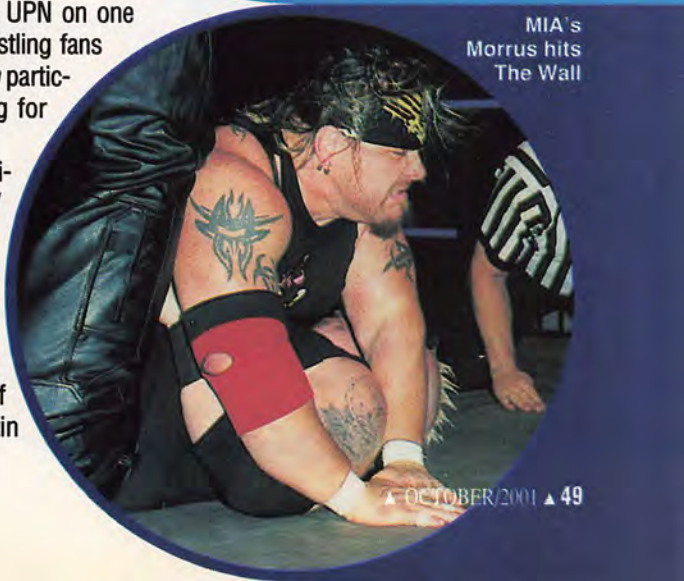
•**Kevin Nash** kidnaps **David Flair** and brutally beats him to get WCW CEO **Ric Flair**, who hasn't been getting along with his son, to concede to his plans. Nash is the fan favorite in all of this.

•*Variety* reports that Fusient-owned WCW hopes to work with the WWF to make WCW/WWF pay-per-views a reality. Somebody at that publication must be able to predict the future.

•**Hugh Morrus** says in a radio interview that he believes the reason the **Misfits In Action** were broken up was because they were becoming too popular with the fans, thereby becoming a threat to others in WCW.

•WCW World champion **Scott Steiner** is charged with assault after laying the boots to an EMT who was trying to take care of **Christopher Daniels** and **Michael Modest**, whom Steiner had just destroyed. Apparently WCW never told "Big Poppa Pump" that the EMT was a real one and wasn't to be touched.

•*Smackdown Extreme* airs in the normal *Smackdown* time slot on UPN on one Thursday night. There are no ECW tie-ins on the program, leaving wrestling fans everywhere wondering what made this particular episode of *Smackdown* particularly extreme (other than the fact that maybe the WWF was looking for extremely high ratings).



MIA's Morrus hits The Wall

•Former WCW color commentator **Bobby Heenan** says that WCW officials replaced him with **Mark Madden** because they wanted a more MTV feel. If there is one thing Mark Madden is not, it's MTV.

•**Antonio Inoki** announces that he has booked a match pitting **Mike Tyson** against **Naoya Ogawa**. Tyson's people deny they've ever spoken to Inoki, let alone worked out such a deal.

•Going into No Way Out in February, **Triple-H** and **"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin** are told they are not allowed to antagonize one another. If Triple-H breaks the rule, he'll be suspended for six months; if Austin

the wacky & weird

the wacky and weird

Heenan was all wet

breaks it, he's out of the WrestleMania main event. Not so scared to death by this stipulation, Austin uses the, *um,* facilities in Triple-H's dressing room, overflowing the toilet; Triple-H, on the other hand, repeatedly gets in Austin's face and begs Austin to hit him. The definition of antagonize must have changed since we last looked it up.

•NBC pledges to carry the XFL for a second year, despite its dismal ratings. The rest of the entertainment industry thinks, *Yeah, sure you will.*

•Vince McMahon's announcement of the WWF's purchase of WCW is simulcast on both *Raw* and *Nitro. Raw's* feed is perfect. *Nitro's* feed, however, has audio/visual problems. Not too long after the acquisition, the curse of WCW starts affecting the WWF, as its production team starts missing finishes to important matches.

•Raven's masked ninja woman is revealed to be **Tori**. The unmasking marks the last time Tori is seen with **Raven**. In fact, she disappears from WWF TV immediately after being unmasked—on the ratings challenged *Heat*, no less.

She's no ninja

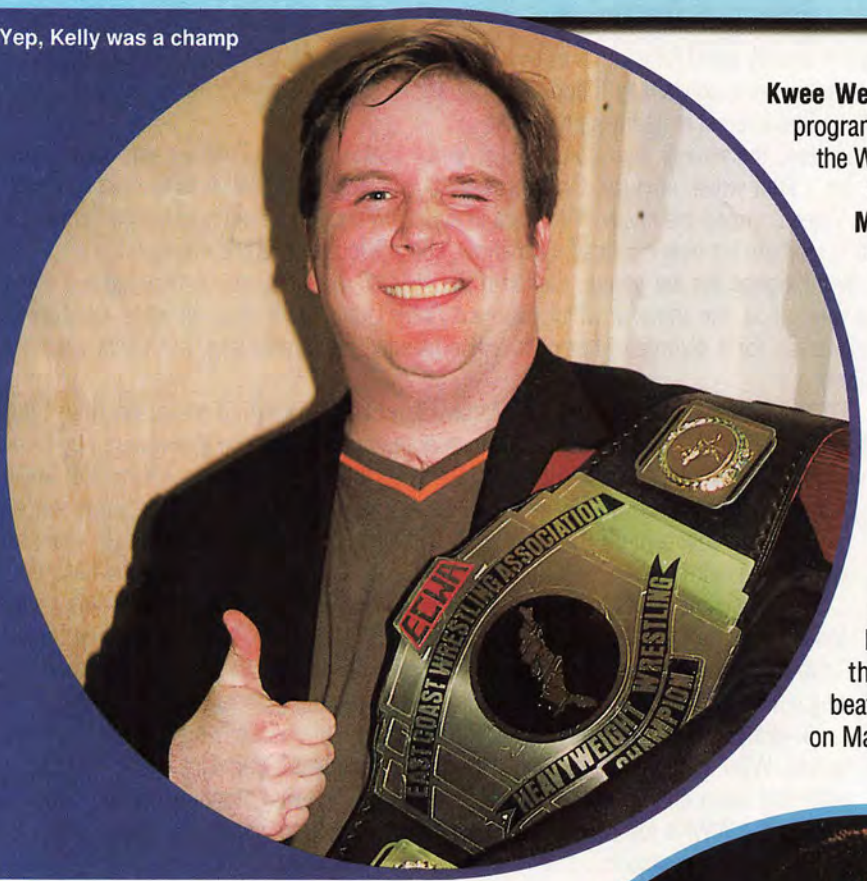
•XFL President **Basil DeVito** pledges that the XFL will return for a second year, NBC or no NBC. The rest of the sporting industry thinks, *Yeah, sure it will.*

•**Vince Russo**, freed from his Time Warner contract, releases a statement in which he says he'll be heard from again, but he won't return to the WWF. However, Russo goes on to say that if Vince McMahon ever needs him, he'll be there.

•Minnesota Governor **Jesse Ventura** tells a reporter, "Until you've hunted man, you haven't hunted yet."

•**"Road Dogg" Jesse James**, who had been let go by the WWF because of substance abuse problems, tries to auction off two hours of his time on eBay. Bids go as high as $13,000 before the whole thing is called off when it's discovered most of the bids are not serious ones.

Yep, Kelly was a champ



Kwee Wee on its nationally syndicated *Worldwide* program one week after Meng appeared as Haku in the WWF.

•ECWA heavyweight champion **Cheetah Master** shocks almost everyone in attendance at a show in Wilmington, Delaware, when, given a choice of any wrestler in **Kevin Kelly's** heel clique, he picks Kelly himself as the man who will receive a title shot against him later that night. With a lot of help from his clique, Kelly pins Cheetah to win the belt in a no-DQ match without ever removing his blazer. Yes, *that* Kevin Kelly!

•With the hardcore title's 24/7 rule seemingly put to bed, **Rhyno** takes it upon himself to reinstate the rule when he gores **Chris Jericho** and pins him for the title only seconds after Jericho had beaten **The Big Show** for the belt in Calgary on May 28. □

Bidding war for Meng/Haku?

•**Shane Douglas** settles out of court for an undisclosed amount of money for a 1997 incident in which he was accused of spitting on a 15-year-old girl during an ECW show.

•The NWA debunks its own "Tradition Rules" marketing campaign by not allowing three-time former NWA World champion **Dusty Rhodes** to advertise his match against NWA heavyweight champion (note the lack of the word "world") **Steve Corino** as an NWA world title match. Why? Because Rhodes' promotion, Turnbuckle Championship Wrestling, where the match would take place, isn't an NWA affiliate. Tradition rules all right.

•Because he was so over in WCW, the WWF secretly signs WCW hardcore champion **Meng** (**Haku**) to a multi-year contract and brings him in for the Royal Rumble. Perhaps hoping to lure its hardcore champion back, WCW reminds Meng of how well it was treating him at the time of his jump. It airs **Kronic** beating Meng and partner

MID-YEAR REPORT

top 10 Raw/Smackdown

top 10 *Raw* moments of the half-year

10. The commish gets funky. William Regal is usually good for a laugh or two (at least), but he was absolutely hilarious when he was confronted with dancing with some of Grandmaster Sexay's lady friends on May 14. Regal's face contorted so badly that you would have thought he was in a trailer park. He had no interest in gettin' jiggy widdit.

Trish had many *Raw* moments

9. Introducing slop, the newest hair conditioner. Vince McMahon and Trish Stratus were a hot item—well, for a little while, anyway. On February 26, sensing that Trish was getting too self-important, Vince dumped the lovely WWF diva in shocking fashion by pouring the contents of a disgusting slop bucket over her head. Somehow, she still looked pretty damn good.

8. What's good for the goose. Earlier in the year, Vince McMahon demanded a divorce from wife, Linda, the shock of which eventually sent Linda into a catatonic state. On April 9, Linda asked for a divorce of her own. Vince pleaded for forgiveness, but Linda wouldn't hear of it.

7. The littlest Dudley debuts. On March 19, former ECW World champion Rhyno debuted on WWF TV (he had been working dark matches and house show bouts) by helping Edge and Christian beat The Hardy Boyz for the WWF World tag team title. Spike Dudley's debut later in the evening, however, was even more special because almost no one knew the former ECW giant killer had even signed with the WWF. Oh yeah, he also helped half-brothers Buh Buh Ray and D-Von Dudley beat E & C for the belts.

6. So horrible it had to make it. After being kicked to the curb, Trish Stratus asked Vince McMahon to take her back on March 5. Vince did so, but only after he forced Trish to disgrace herself by making her disrobe on national TV and crawl around the ring while barking like a dog. Maybe the most disturbing segment in *Raw* history.

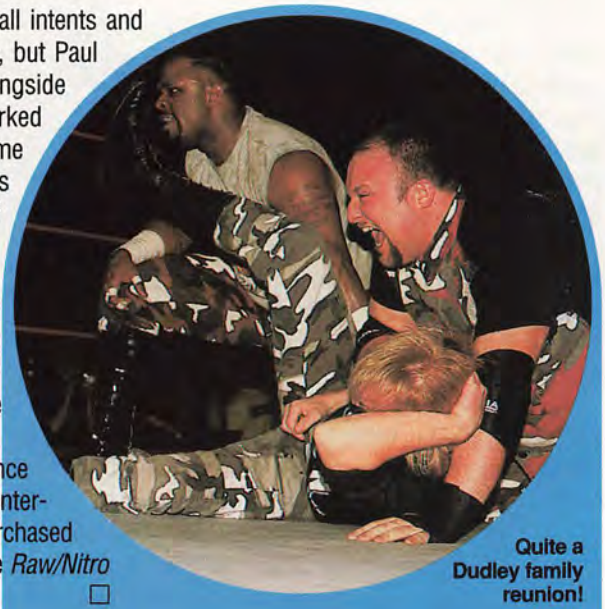
5. Welcome to the top tier. With many WWF fans bemoaning the WWF's glass ceiling, WWF matchmakers decided to give Chris Jericho and Chris Benoit a shot at WWF tag team champs Steve Austin and Triple-H on May 21. Jericho and Benoit's upset of the WWF's top two wrestlers catapulted them into what appear now to be full-time main-event positions.

4. It sure took long enough. For two months, WCW had belonged to Shane McMahon, but WCW wrestlers were nowhere to be seen on any WWF programming—until Lance Storm, in his hometown of Calgary, ran in from the crowd and laid out Perry Saturn with a superkick on May 28. Finally, Shane McMahon and WCW's influence was felt.

3. *Raw* is ECW. It had for all intents and purposes been dead for months, but Paul Heyman's appearance at *Raw* alongside Jim Ross on March 5 officially marked the beginning of ECW's end. A short time later, ECW filed for bankruptcy. Heyman's first appearance came less than a week after previous *Raw* color man Jerry Lawler walked out of the WWF to protest the firing of his wife, Stacy "The Kat" Carter.

2. Not him, too. At WrestleMania, Steve Austin and Vince McMahon collaborated to steal The Rock's WWF title—and Triple-H was angry about it, or so he wanted us to believe. One night later, on April 2, Rock was wrestling Austin in a steel cage when McMahon interfered. Helmsley stormed the ring with sledgehammer in hand. We thought he was going to side with Rock. He didn't.

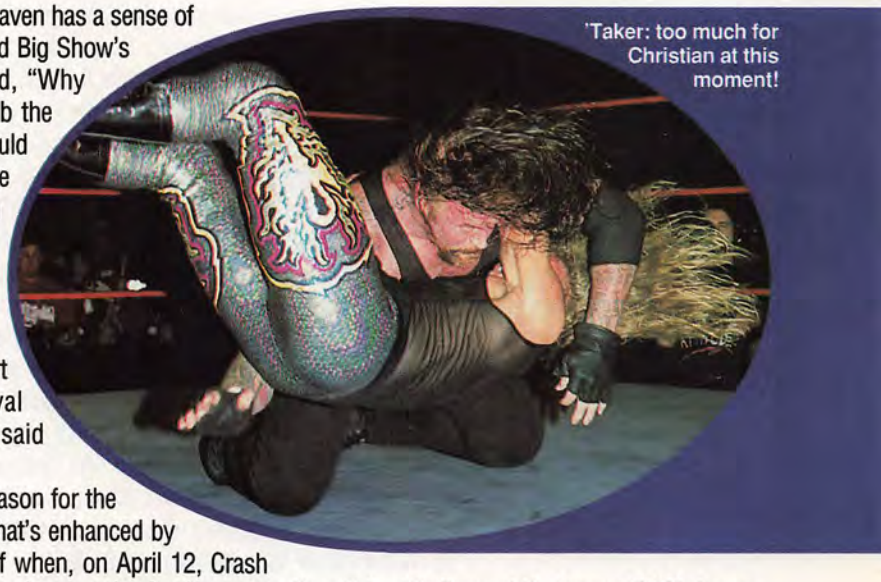
1. The war continues. On March 26, just when it looked as if Vince McMahon was going to rid himself of WCW forever, his son, Shane, interrupted a historic monologue to announce that he, not Vince, had purchased WCW. A brand new chapter in the WWF-WCW war was born during the *Raw/Nitro* simulcast on TNN and TNT. □



Quite a Dudley family reunion!

moments of the half-year

top 10 *Smackdown* moments of the half-year


'Taker: too much for Christian at this moment!

10. Where'd the charisma go? Believe it or not, Raven has a sense of humor. On February 13, when asked why he accepted Big Show's challenge for a hardcore match, Raven responded, "Why would I accept his challenge? Why would Jack climb the beanstalk? Why would David fight Goliath? Why would Arnold challenge the Gooch?" Raven then admitted he only accepted the challenge because Vince McMahon had ordered him to. Funny stuff.

9. Some punishment. Just as winter was kicking into high gear, the relationship between Trish Stratus and Vince McMahon was getting steamy. But on January 9, when Trish volunteered to manage Kurt Angle for his match against Triple-H at the Royal Rumble, Vince wasn't too pleased ... until Trish said Vince should spank her for being "a very bad girl."

8. We sweat him. If we were asked to give one reason for the WWF's success, we'd point to its slapstick comedy that's enhanced by sex and violence. We know we laughed our butts off when, on April 12, Crash Holly was viciously gored into a metal door by Rhyno only seconds after he arrogantly said he didn't sweat the former ECW champ.

7. Europe, North Carolina. WWF fans tend to put Jeff Hardy on a pedestal and treat brother Matt like he's just some schlub off the street. That all changed when Matt captured the European title from Eddie Guerrero on April 24. For the first time, Matt became the most talked about Hardy.

6. Brotherly love. Kane and The Undertaker have feuded, made their peace, feuded, and made their peace more times than we care to count. That still didn't take away from their WWF World tag team title win on April 17. Simply put, Edge and Christian, two other brothers, were schooled.

5. Commissioner or ambassador? Al Snow wanted the job of WWF commissioner. On March 8, he got a shot at the office. Vince McMahon booked a match between Snow and William Regal; the winner would become the commish. Regal won, and he's been one of the most entertaining commissioners ever.

Dangerous (but entertaining) commish!

4. That's fair? Having lost his WWF title at WrestleMania and been beaten down by Steve Austin, Triple-H, and Vince McMahon on the following *Raw,* it was apparent that The Rock was no match for the new triad. On April 5, McMahon suspended Rock indefinitely "in the interest of fairness," which didn't seem fair at all. Of course, he just happened to be heading off to film *The Scorpion King* at the time.

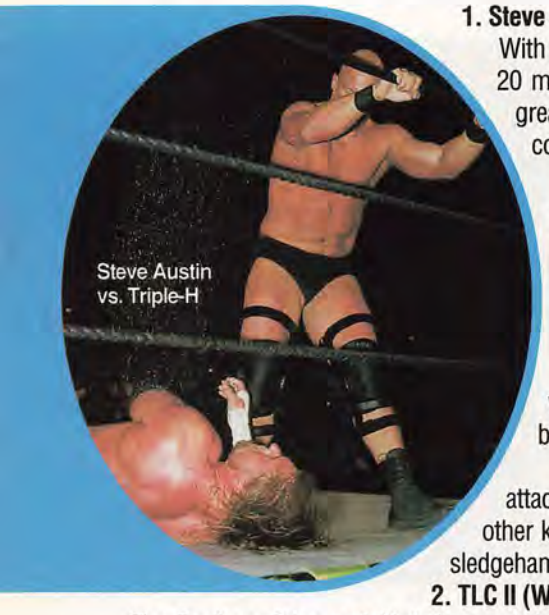
3. From a super team ... a superstar. The Hardy Boyz are one of the most daring WWF tag teams ever. But until April 12, nobody knew how the brothers would do in the singles ranks. That night, Jeff upset Triple-H for the Intercontinental title and proved the Hardys were ready to become more than great tag team wrestlers. They were ready to become great WWF wrestlers, period.

2. "The Game" is on the team. When Triple-H joined forces with Steve Austin and Vince McMahon, many people began wondering how he'd fare in a subservient role. By beating Chris Jericho for the Intercontinental title, the federation's number-two title, on April 5, Triple-H proved he was more than ready (and willing) to become the WWF's number-two man.

1. TLC III. It might go down in history as the most noteworthy TLC match ever. Wrestled on May 22, III was the first TLC match to involve four teams instead of three. It was also the first TLC match to be shown on broadcast TV. As an added bonus, we all got to watch Chris Jericho and Chris Benoit foil Vince McMahon's plans by retaining their WWF tag team title. □

MID-YEAR REPORT

top 20 PPV matches of the half-year


Steve Austin vs. Triple-H

1. Steve Austin vs. Triple-H (WWF No Way Out)

With the demise of both ECW and WCW, it's remarkable that we can put together a list of 20 memorable contests from the first half of 2001. Even more remarkable is that several great matches didn't make the cut, and that the stellar Austin vs. Triple-H bout had heavy competition for Match of the Half-Year.

This best-of-three-falls match ran an amazing 40 minutes and still had fans clamoring for more. This was Austin's chance for retribution after Triple-H paid Rikishi to run him down with a car at the 1999 Survivor Series. The match silenced those who said Austin would never be able to come back from a spinal injury.

Both men paced themselves in the first fall. After almost 15 minutes, Austin connected with the stunner to go up 1-0.

Things broke down in the second fall, contested under streetfight rules. Both men were a bloody mess and the announcers' table was in pieces when, after 14 minutes of brutal violence, Triple-H surprised Austin with a pedigree to even the score at 1-1.

The final fall took place in a cage and degenerated into a battle for survival. Both men attacked with barbed wire and connected with their respective finishers, only to have the other kick out. In the end, Austin connected with a two-by-four as Triple-H connected with a sledgehammer. Triple-H was fortunate to land on Austin to win the final fall.

2. TLC II (WWF WrestleMania X-Seven)

The Dudleys, Edge and Christian, and the Hardys revisited their classic match from last year with even more death-defying megaspots, as well as interference from Lita and Rhyno. Edge's spear of Jeff Hardy off a ladder some 15 feet above the ring was breathtaking. So was Lita's huracanrana on Rhyno. And Rhyno's gore of Matt Hardy through a table set up in a corner. Just like in TLC I, Edge and Christian emerged victorious.

3. The Rock vs. Steve Austin (WWF WrestleMania X-Seven)

Would there be a turn? Would one of the two be able to score a clean pin? Would Vince McMahon play a key role? Those were just a few of the questions surrounding the main event of 'Mania. We got the answers to all of them in a brutal, dramatic, and thrilling match. Both men bled, both got many two-counts, and both tried out the other's finisher. With a lot of help from Vince, "Stone-Cold" the heel got the pin and the WWF title.

4. Shane McMahon vs. Vince McMahon (WWF WrestleMania X-Seven)

A match between two non-wrestlers had no business being this good. Sure, there was plenty of drama. Yeah, Mick Foley was the referee, so you knew there would be plenty of cheap pops. And Steph and Trish were a catfight waiting to happen. But after Vince blackened Shane's eye, after Linda rose from her drug-induced stupor, after Trish and Steph rolled around in a hair-pulling catfight, and after Foley bludgeoned Vince into semi-consciousness, Shane got the win using a version of Rob Van Dam's Van terminator.

5. Triple-H vs. The Undertaker (WWF WrestleMania X-Seven)

No one was expecting anything resembling great technical wrestling from this match, least of all the two participants. This match was great for the sheer brutality. There was plenty of brawling, lots of blood, and liberal use of Hunter's sledgehammer. 'Taker's last ride power bomb spelled the end for Triple-H.

6. Kurt Angle vs. Chris Benoit (WWF WrestleMania X-Seven)

The burning question was who was the best technical wrestler in the WWF, and the match showed that fans still appreciate technical catch-as-catch-can action. Benoit used his Crippler crossface several times, but Angle only tapped while the referee was unconscious. Fourteen minutes in, Angle blocked an armdrag and rolled up "The Wolverine" while holding his tights.

7. Royal Rumble match (WWF Royal Rumble)

The Rumble always delivers some great moments, and this year was no exception. Kane dominated, Drew Carey amused, and Haku, The Big Show, and Honky Tonk Man astounded. Oh yeah, Austin won … again.

8. Six-way cruiserweight elimination match (WCW SuperBrawl)

WCW didn't have a lot of shining PPV moments, but this was one. Shane Helms arrived when he outlasted Shannon Moore, Kaz Hayashi, Yang, Evan Karagias, and Jamie Knoble to earn a shot at Chavo Guerrero Jr.'s cruiserweight belt.

9. Chris Jericho vs. Chris Benoit ladder match (WWF Royal Rumble)

A good match that fell a tad short of some of the all-time ladder match classics. Jericho earned some respect by cleanly beating Benoit, though "The Crippler" had dominated several previous encounters. Jericho's inverted Walls of Jericho tarantula on top of the

ladder was a particularly inventive spot.

10. Tommy Dreamer vs. C.W. Anderson "I Quit" match (ECW Guilty as Charged)

Guilty as Charged was ECW's only foray into PPV in 2001, and it may have been Dreamer's last PPV match ever. Both men bled buckets, and Dreamer managed to hit a Spicolli driver through a table and brutalize Anderson with a microphone cord to get the win.

Tommy Dreamer vs. C.W. Anderson

11. Kane vs. Raven vs. The Big Show (WWF WrestleMania X-Seven)

Three words: golf cart chase. Raven ran with the big dogs in this match that spilled all over the Astrodome. The golf cart chase was hysterical, but Show throwing Raven through a window and Kane executing a modified Superfly dive through a sound stage could be classified as brutal slapstick ultraviolence.

12. Scott Steiner vs. Jeff Jarrett vs. Sid vs. mystery opponent (WCW Sin)

This was responsible for one of the most sickeningly enduring images of 2001—Sid's mangled leg, twisted with his toes pointing behind him. This was supposed to be the first PPV of the WCW Fusient era, and as it turned out, it was a harbinger of things to come. The mystery opponent was Animal ... and Steiner won.

13. Meng vs. Crowbar vs. Terry Funk (WCW Sin)

This was just a mess, but it was a lot of fun. Funk was having fun, Crowbar was working his tail off as usual, and Meng was making a resurgence. Not particularly memorable, but entertaining. Meng won it.

14. Stephanie McMahon vs. Trish Stratus (WWF No Way Out)

Seriously. This match had no reason to be good, but it was a real guilty pleasure. William Regal's antics were priceless. Vince may have forced Trish to disrobe on *Raw,* but Steph took care of it herself here.

15. Yoshihiro Tajiri and Mikey Whipwreck vs. FBI vs. Kid Kash and Super Crazy (ECW Guilty as Charged)

Kash and Crazy executed some crazy dives early on, but were quickly eliminated once Sal E. Graziano got involved. This may be the last PPV outing for Mikey and the FBI, and they turned in a memorable performance. Tajiri and Mikey scored the double-pinfall win.

16. Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Rey Misterio Jr. (WCW SuperBrawl Revenge)

The Luchadores had a little fun, putting Rey's old mask on each other's heads a few times, but the finish was hardly playful: Chavo destroyed Rey with a brainbuster to earn the clear-cut win. This would have been better if we were watching the Misterio of 1998 instead of the Filthy Animal version.

Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Rey Misterio Jr.

17. The Rock vs. Kurt Angle (WWF No Way Out)

Angle was a cornered animal in this match. He tried to snap Rock's ankle several times, but Rock kept battling back. Finally, Rock captured the WWF title for a record sixth time after dropping Angle with two Rock bottoms.

18. Chris Jericho vs. William Regal (WWF WrestleMania X-Seven)

Jericho got 'Mania off to a good start with a quick win over the WWF commissioner. Regal tried to slow the pace, but Jericho controlled the action and put the commish away in just seven minutes.

19. Kanyon vs. Dallas Page (WCW SuperBrawl Revenge)

It took forever for this feud to come to a close. Page had the upper hand on the former Positively Kanyon, but Jeff Jarrett's interference allowed Kanyon to win with the flatliner. This series might continue in the new WCW.

20. Chris Jericho vs. X-Pac vs. Eddie Guerrero vs. Chris Benoit (WWF No Way Out)

Put these guys in the ring together and you're likely to get a good show. Very stiff match, and Y2J seemed unlikely to retain his I-C belt, but he did so by pinning X-Pac. □

the mid-year awards

the mid-year awards

Tag team of the half-year: The Dudley Boyz

If a Time Warner-owned WCW had been around for the entire half-year, perhaps a team from that company could have stolen this award. Sean O'Haire and Chuck Palumbo, had they continued developing, continued dominating more experienced teams like Totally Buff, and continued to hold the tag belts, might have won.

Unfortunately, they were active for only half the half-year, so Buh Buh Ray and D-Von Dudley were our choice. You see, the problem for the WWF in regard to tag teams is a very good one to have: It just has too damn many good ones for any of them to really stand out over the others.

Once again, the big three of WWF teams—the Dudleys, Edge and Christian, and the Hardys—dominated the division. Buh Buh Ray and D-Von had the longest reign of the half-year (January 21 to March 5) and added another two-week reign later in March.

It's hard to believe that we once believed the Dudleys would be overmatched in the WWF and wrote that they made a mistake jumping from ECW. Now they're the most popular team in the federation, and Buh Buh Ray can work any crowd into a frenzy just by flashing the look that says he's about to say, "D-Von … get the tables!"

Though the Dudleys appeared to take a half-step backward by feuding with X-Factor and the Hollys in the spring, they dominated both teams. In fact, they beat just about every WWF team during the first half of the year.

No surprise there.

Wrestler of the half-year: Kurt Angle

Kurt Angle started 2001 wondering what he could do to follow up the greatest rookie year in WWF history. After all, he had won the European, Intercontinental, and World titles, and he was crowned King of the Ring to boot.

So far so good with that follow-up.

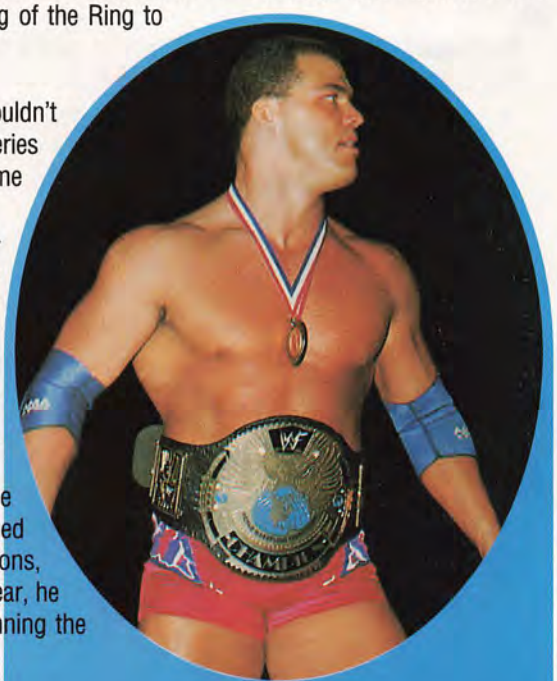
On January 1, 2001, Angle was the reigning WWF champion. But he couldn't shake the perception that he didn't deserve his lofty status. His Survivor Series shenanigans with his brother didn't help, either. It was only a matter of time before he was exposed as being the WWF's biggest sham.

That was supposed to happen at the Royal Rumble, when he faced Triple-H. At the end of the night, Angle was still champ. The Rock was supposed to have no trouble beating Angle at No Way Out. Instead, Angle put Rock through hell. Angle lost that match, but The Rock was fortunate to win.

Then there was Chris Benoit. The Benoit-Angle series was one of the best in the WWF during the last five years. Benoit was supposed to show everyone what a true shooter could do at WrestleMania. Instead, he got pinned. Even after Benoit stole Angle's medals, Angle got revenge.

By June, Angle had slipped out of the title picture and was Shane McMahon's new whipping boy. But in the first part of this year, Angle emerged victorious against Chris Jericho, Benoit, Triple-H, Austin, and on a few occasions, The Rock. If Angle wants to compete for the distinction of Wrestler of the Year, he has to stop the silliness with Spike Dudley and Shane and get back to winning the big-time matches.

He's quite capable of doing it.



Most popular wrestler of the half-year: Chris Jericho

Both Chris Jericho and Chris Benoit benefited from Steve Austin's heel turn at WrestleMania. When Austin made a dirty deal with Vince McMahon, the WWF needed fan favorites to fill the vacancy he left. It needed popular new main-eventers.

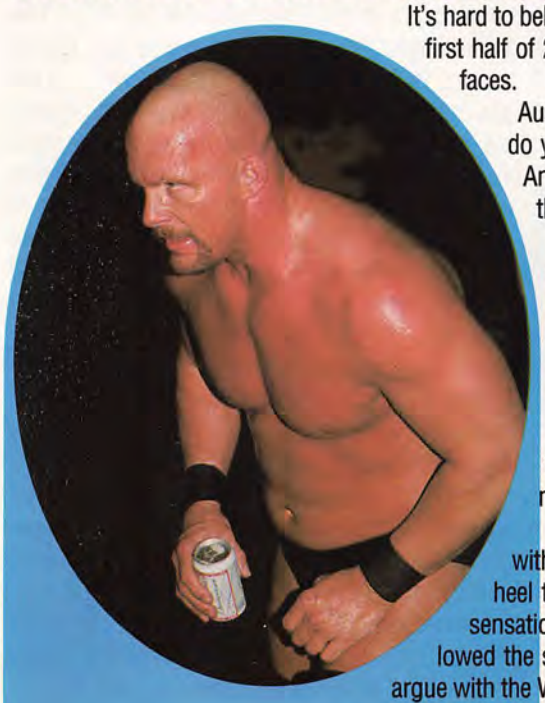
Both Benoit and Jericho stepped forward, but Jericho's fan base has far surpassed Benoit's. Jericho's stiffest competition for this award would have been The Rock, but "The Great One" has been busy filming *The Scorpion King* since WrestleMania X-Seven.

Strange as it sounds, Jericho ought to give some credit for his popularity to William Regal. Regal made a perfect villain for Jericho to play off, and together, they were able to put on some solid matches as well.

Part of Jericho's appeal lies in the fact that although he doesn't win every match, you wouldn't be surprised to see him win *any* match. He's the main-eventer who's a bit of an underdog. His energetic style and slick entrances fire up audiences so much that even when he loses, it doesn't affect his popularity.

The summer months will be critical for Y2J. He's made no secret of his obsession with winning the WWF title, and as of this writing, he was finally in a position to make that dream a reality. However, The Rock will most likely have returned to the WWF by SummerSlam. Triple-H should be back sometime in the fall, and most observers expect Hunter to quickly target Austin. With Matt Hardy getting closer to Lita, there's a possibility that The Hardy Boyz will be full-time singles wrestlers by fall. That means there are going to be a lot of fan favorites jockeying for World title shots. If Jericho can't get the job done as a babyface, expect him to revert to his former heelish ways by Survivor Series.

Most hated wrestler of the half-year: Steve Austin



It's hard to believe, but Austin just edged out Triple-H as the most despicable wrestler of the first half of 2001—this after four months of being one of the federation's top two babyfaces.

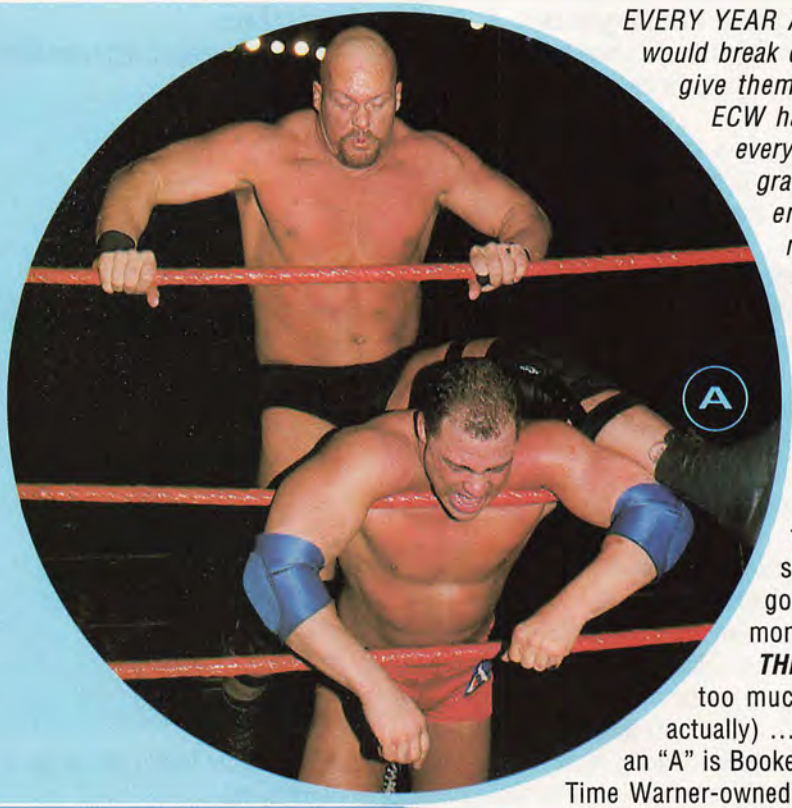
Austin's heel turn at WrestleMania X-Seven was in the works for months. How do you go about turning a wildly popular anti-hero whose motto is "Don't Trust Anybody" and who gets positive crowd reactions no matter whom he fights into the hated "Bionic Redneck"?

First, Austin sold out and formed an alliance with Vince McMahon. When asked for a reason, Austin finally suggested he needed an insurance policy, tearing down his image as the ever-confident ass-kicker. Then he busted open Jim Ross and partnered with Triple-H. But Austin went a step further than merely associating with the evil set. He took away aspects of his character that the fans loved. His interviews degenerated into "My name is 'Stone-Cold' Steve Austin and I deserve to be treated ..." He almost appeared to be Triple-H's lackey at times. And instead of charging the ring at any time, now he runs at the first hint of trouble.

Unlike Hulk Hogan's 1996 heel turn, the hatred didn't come right away. But with each passing week, Austin is despised more and more. Some might say his heel turn has been *too* effective; the WWF might have killed off its most popular sensation of the post-Hogan era. Ironically, Austin's heel turn worked because he followed the same mantra that initially made him so popular: Win at all costs. It's hard to argue with the WWF champ. □

the grades are in...

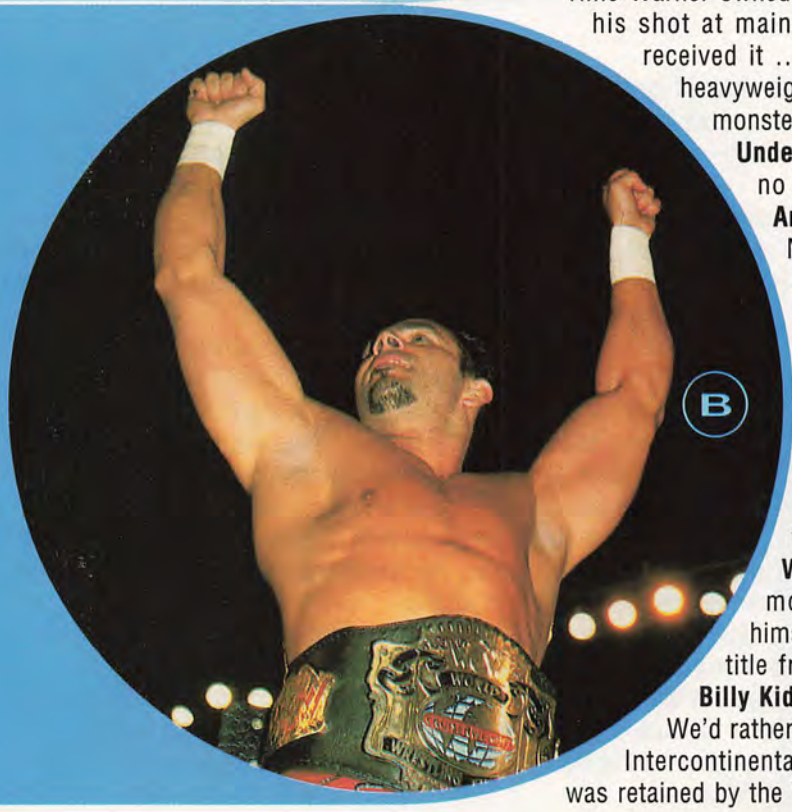
the grades are in...



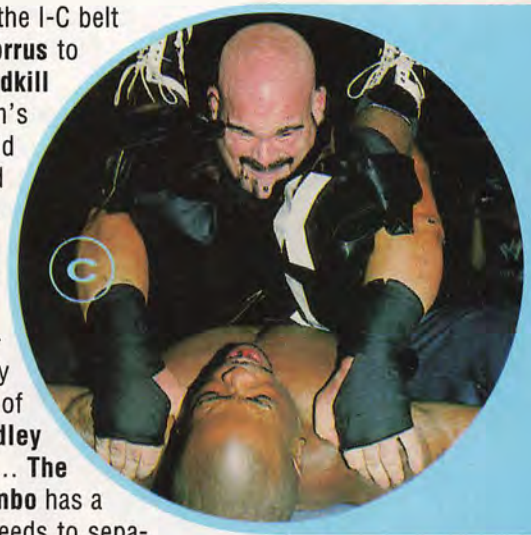
EVERY YEAR AT this time, PWI and its sister magazines would break down the stars of every major promotion and give them their mid-year grades. But with WCW and ECW having gone by the wayside, we're throwing everyone into one big barrel and giving them their grades here. WWF wrestlers were graded on the entire six-month period, while the grades of most ECW and WCW stars were graded on a curve.

THEY GET AN "A": **"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin** might have turned his back on the fans by partnering with Vince McMahon and Triple-H, but he was a dominant WWF champ since WrestleMania X-Seven ... Until **Triple-H** tore his quadriceps muscle in May, he was playing second fiddle to Austin as the federation's Intercontinental champion. But he was still the federation's MVP ... If WCW hadn't gone dark, **Booker T** might have had the best six months of any wrestler in the Big Two.

THEY GET A "B": **The Rock** has been spending too much time in Hollywood of late (all of his time, actually) ... The only reason **Scott Steiner** isn't receiving an "A" is Booker T had him on the ropes for the last month of Time Warner-owned WCW ... **Chris Jericho** has been waiting for his shot at main-eventing for a long time—and has finally received it ... **Rhyno** left ECW as the promotion's World heavyweight and TV champion. He's been an absolute monster during his short time with the WWF ... **The Undertaker** might be getting up there in age, but by no means is he old. Right, Triple-H? ... **Kurt Angle** made a fine, albeit cocky WWF champion. Now he's the WWF mid-carder with the most breakout potential ... **Chris Benoit** proved that you don't have to be an Olympic wrestler to outwrestle a gold medalist ... **Steve Corino** shocked everyone by becoming the ECW World champion last year. He carried that success to the NWA, where he is currently the heavyweight champ ... **"Diamond" Dallas Page** provided WCW with sparks when there were precious few to be found ... **Mikey Whipwreck** and **Yoshihiro Tajiri** were ECW's most exciting team ... **Matt Hardy** separated himself from brother Jeff by winning the European title from Eddie Guerrero ... **Rey Misterio Jr.** and **Billy Kidman** caught fire just as WCW wound down ... We'd rather see **Kane** wrestling for the World title than the Intercontinental strap ... One of the reasons **Sean O'Haire** was retained by the WWF is that he will be a huge star one day ...

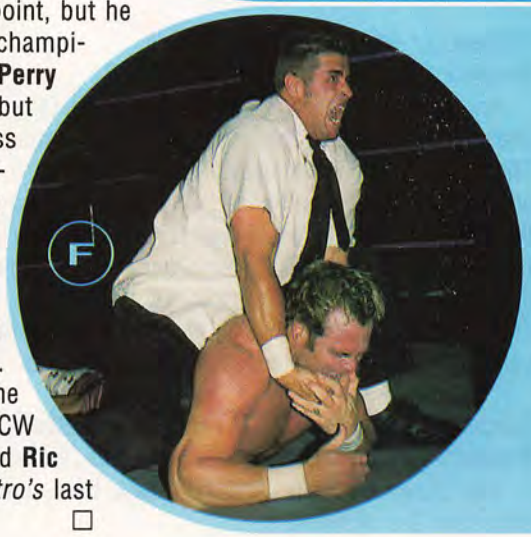


The high point of **Jeff Hardy's** career came when he beat Triple-H for the I-C belt (his reign lasted six days) ... **The Misfits In Action** allowed **Hugh Morrus** to prove he's no laughing matter ... Let's hope **Danny Doring** and **Roadkill** join WCW's tag team division ... **Lita** has done more for women's wrestling than even Chyna ... **Edge** and **Christian** might not have held the WWF World tag team title much lately, but they don't really need the belts ... **Shane McMahon** doesn't wrestle often, but he's damn good ... We liked the aggressive dark side that **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** displayed as WCW's cruiserweight champ ... **Steve Blackman** had a strong run as hardcore champion ... So did **Raven**.



THEY GET A "C": **William Regal** has been a great WWF commissioner; he just hasn't wrestled enough ... **Eddie Guerrero** was too busy trying to impress the Hardys and Lita to be consistent ... Speaking of Eddie, **Chyna** hasn't been the same since dumping him ... **The Dudley Boyz** have lost much of the edge they once had, but they're still over ... **The Sandman** had a *very* short-lived ECW World title reign ... **Chuck Palumbo** has a look, but we're not sure if it's a superstar wrestler's look ... **Albert** needs to separate himself from X-Factor ... Before Shane McMahon bought WCW, **Mike Awesome** started to get on track by joining Team Canada ... **Big Show** still hasn't become the dominant player everyone in the WWF thinks he can be ... For the first time in a long while, **Lex Luger** looked like he was having fun ... The WWF should sign **C.W. Anderson** for WCW and pair him with **Arn Anderson** ... **Bob Holly** ought to go solo ... **Rick Steiner** cheated his way to the U.S. title ... **Jerry Lynn** needs to establish his presence in the WWF. So far, nobody really knows he's there ... **Test** has everything it takes to go to the top, yet he still hasn't gotten there ... **Buff Bagwell** needs to become more than a cartoon character ... At the time ECW closed its doors, **Tommy Dreamer** was a valiant warrior, but not always a winning one ... **Mark Jindrak** never did enough to outshine his other Natural Born Thrillers partners ... **Bradshaw** and **Faarooq** need to get serious and go after some gold ... **Justin Credible** and **X-Pac** still have potential as a team ... **Little Guido Maritato** remained one of ECW's most dependable (if not spectacular) wrestlers.

THEY GET A "D": **Billy Gunn** might have been "The One" at one point, but he certainly isn't now ... **Crash Holly** was better during his hardcore championship days ... **Molly Holly** can do a lot better ... **Dean Malenko** and **Perry Saturn** haven't clicked with WWF fans ... **Spike Dudley** looks good but usually loses ... **Essa Rios** and **Kaientai** are still waiting for Jim Ross to come through on his promise of pushing the light heavyweight division ... It was thought **K-Kwik** might do better once Road Dogg left town. Not if he can't shake his nagging injuries.



THEY GET AN "F": All the members of **Right To Censor** should be censored ... **Haku** can't get the stench of WCW off him.

THEY GET AN "INCOMPLETE": **Tazz**, **Al Snow**, and **Jacquelyn** spent too much time training MTV's *Tough Enough* wannabes ... Where has **Big Bossman** been hiding? ... Injuries kept **Rikishi** from the ring ... **Rob Van Dam** was inactive on the national scene long before ECW closed ... One match does not a six-month period make for **Sting** and **Ric Flair** ... **Kevin Nash** and **Bill Goldberg** didn't even show up for *Nitro's* last hurrah. □

second half predictions

second half predictions

Will HBK finally come back?

Shawn Michaels will *finally* make his long-awaited return to the WWF

Michaels has been AWOL since he showed up at a pre-WrestleMania X-Seven *Raw* and had a falling-out with federation higher-ups. The incident received plenty of play on the Internet, but no one in the WWF has said much publicly on the subject since. Since the WWF is the only big game in town now, it doesn't have to worry about any star jumping to another promotion, but Michaels is still a potential main-event performer, a commodity the WWF still finds itself lacking, particularly with the relaunch of WCW in the works. Michaels could take Triple-H's spot as Steve Austin's running buddy, and Triple-H (when he returns) could help WCW get off to a strong start.

Hulk Hogan's new promotion will vanish after one taping

Universal Studios and Hulk Hogan finally appear to be on their way to scheduling a card for Hogan's proposed new promotion. Most likely, if it ever gets off the ground, Hogan and friends will hold one four-hour event, then edit the show down to three one-hour episodes that would be shopped around to various cable outlets. We have a feeling not even Rupert Murdoch would be willing to pay much for matches involving the likes of Hogan, Jim Duggan, Brian Blair, Brutus Beefcake, and John Tenta—especially if Hogan wanted to break up the wrestling segments with musical performances featuring himself and Jimmy Hart. We can see the train wreck coming from here.

Vince McMahon will win the WCW World title

It's no secret Vince has wanted to destroy WCW for more than a decade. What better way to really stick it to Shane and company than by winning the WCW World title and appearing with it on WWF television? Vince will goad Shane into a series of matches with a handful of unusual stipulations, and Vinnie Mac will join Buddy Rogers, Ric Flair, Hulk Hogan, Bret Hart, Paul Wight (Big Show), Sid Vicious, Kevin Nash, and Randy Savage as former WWF and WCW world champions.

Stacy: next Sunny?

Stacy Keibler will become Sunny 2001

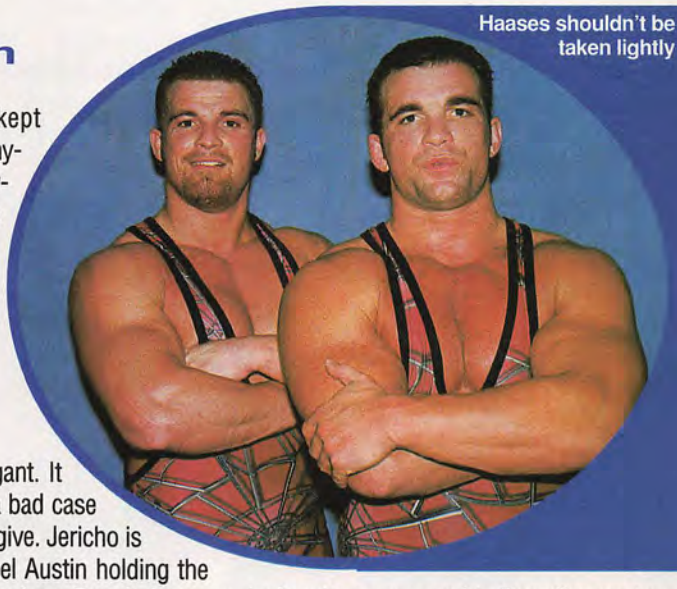
And by that, we mean Sunny in her *prime.* Okay, she's not likely to use that moniker, but the former Miss Hancock has in abundance the looks, charisma, and raw sex appeal that made Sunny such a sensation back in 1996. She could even bring back Sunny's old "I Know You Want Me" entrance theme. By year's end, Stacy will make WWF fans forget all about Chyna, Trish, and Lita. Well, maybe they won't forget about them completely, but she'll be the top diva in the business.

Scott Hall will finally make his long-awaited return to The WWF

See Shawn Michaels. And there have been rumors that the two sides have already talked.

Lance Storm and Booker T will feud over the WCW World title

Storm has all the necessary tools to reach main-event status. When he first arrived in WCW last year, he captured the U.S., cruiserweight, and hardcore titles within a three-week period. Then his push was squashed by the WCW creative team (we still can't figure that one out), and Storm fell into a rut. The fact that Shane O'Mac selected him to do the first run-in on *Raw* (against Perry Saturn) indicates that he has faith in Storm's abilities. Booker and Lance match up very well. WCW could do worse than run with this feud on top for a while.



Haases shouldn't be taken lightly

Charlie and Russ Haas will win the WWF World tag title

Who? The Haas brothers are one of wrestling's best-kept secrets. If you have any doubt, spend two minutes talking to anyone who has seen them compete. The WWF prospects are drawing favorable comparisons to some of the great teams of the past two decades and have looked impressive on WWF house shows, in dark matches, and in Memphis Championship Wrestling. They have what it takes to catch a lot of current teams by surprise.

Chyna, Chris Benoit, and Jeff Hardy will all turn heel

Chyna *already* seems to be a heel; she's become that arrogant. It won't be long before the fans begin to resent her for catching a bad case of Sable-itis. As far as Benoit and Jericho go, something has to give. Jericho is second only to The Rock in terms of popularity, and with a heel Austin holding the WWF title, it just doesn't make sense for him to turn against the fans. Benoit, however, isn't quite as over as his Canadian partner. "The Canadian Crippler" has been too close to the title to let Jericho steal his chance to be a full-time main-eventer. If Jericho beats Austin, look for Benoit to turn within a few weeks. For two years, people have compared the Hardys to The Rockers and braced for the inevitable breakup. It will happen by Survivor Series—when Jeff takes Matt's girl.

Will Raven assemble a new Flock?

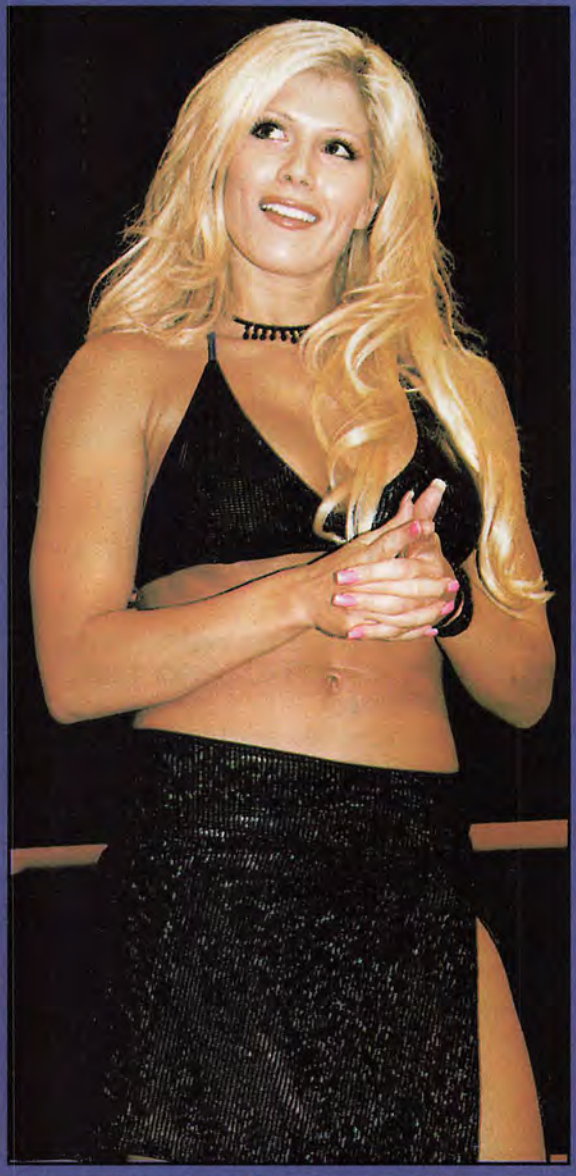
Raven will convert the remaining members of RTC into his new flock

We figured this would have happened by now. Raven earned the ire of Val Venis when he spurned Val's offer to join Right To Censor. Venis, Ivory, Bull Buchanan, and The Goodfather are in need of guidance, and they've already fallen under the spell of Raven's former protege, Steven Richards. Raven is in need of allies. The only person who wouldn't benefit from this would be Richards, whose personal difficulties with Raven are well-documented. He's probably on his way out of the WWF anyway. Is there a red-blooded male out there who wouldn't love to see Ivory decked out in the old Kimona Wana-Laya or Chastity outfits? If the gods of wrestling allow only one of our predictions to come true, please let it be this one! □

the business page

By Harry Burkett

Where is WCW? The McMahons were very ambitious when they indicated WCW might be operational within a few weeks of their purchase. Even with the XFL and WrestleMania X-Seven behind them, and WWFE putting forth a greater effort, it looked as if WCW was still weeks (if not months) away at press time.



As gorgeous as Stacy Keibler is, she can't be the only female in the new WCW, can she? No way. That's why the WWF recently added Torrie Wilson to the ever-expanding roster of the new company. What exactly is planned for the new WCW is still a mystery, however.

An invasion storyline was taking shape. Lance Storm, Hugh Morrus, and Stacy Keibler, and "Diamond" Dallas Page were among the WCW stars who made appearances on WWF TV in May/June. Fully Loaded, the WWF's July pay-per-view, was renamed Invasion.

With such an emphasis on a WWF-WCW showdown so early, there is some concern the WWF might abandon the idea of an autonomous WCW and proceed with a short-term invasion angle only. Fueling that belief is the fact that WWFE has yet to secure a definite time slot for the new WCW program. For months, it was assumed it would work out a deal with TNN to run the WCW show late on Saturday nights. It was also assumed the McMahons would rebuild WCW as a company first, and go forward with the invasion plans a year or so later. Instead, the WWF might seek to establish a WCW presence on WWF TV first, then find a time slot for a WCW show on TNN later. If that wasn't possible, WCW could take over part or all of an existing WWF show.

Jim Ross has confirmed that creative meetings were being held. "The talent roster is rapidly coming together also," he noted on wwf.com. "I really think our fans are going to like what they see ... Contract talks with Goldberg and Dallas Page are at a standstill while the talents continue to negotiate with their former employer in order to receive their releases so they can negotiate with the WWF."

According to Ross at least, all systems are go. Unfortunately, all indications are that Bill Goldberg will be happy to keep collecting on his big AOL Time Warner contract. Although Ross reported that DDP talks weren't going that well, we found out a few weeks after he made those comments that Page did make a deal, as he turned out to be the stalker of The Undertaker's wife.

There is a lot of speculation in the industry that bigger name WCW stars who negotiate and/or sign deals with the WWF are being asked to keep things quiet until they appear on TV.

Billy Kidman, Torrie Wilson, and Chris Kanyon—who weren't among the 24 WCW employees included in the purchase deal—are expected to be key players in the new WCW as well.

Foley on NBC ... Mick Foley, who now boasts two number-one bestsellers, could be seen on television literally—and *literarily*—day and night. Two of his most notable appearances were NBC's *Today Show* and *Tonight Show.*

Katie Couric interviewed Foley on the May 23 *Today Show.* With her bungled introduction of the

hardcore legend, Couric proved she wasn't a closet wrestling fan: "You may know our next guest as Mankind, Cactus Jack, or Love Dude ..."

"Dude Love!" yelled some off-camera voices.

Couric shrugged off the faux pas and expressed surprise that a burly wrestler like Foley could write a book. Foley accepted the backhanded, yet well-intentioned compliments and said he wanted to write more books.

"At least in your new profession, you won't have any broken teeth," said Couric.

"That's highly unlikely," Foley replied with a jack-o'-lantern smile. For the record, Foley never referred to her as Couric Katie.

Foley's banter with Jay Leno, who teamed with Dallas Page against Hollywood Hogan and Eric Bischoff in 1998, on *The Tonight Show* was full of the witty repartee one would expect.

More Ventura controversy ... Governor Jesse Ventura's involvement with wrestling continues to be an easy target of his political foes and the Minnesota press. His confrontation with Vince McMahon at *Raw* at the Target Center in Minneapolis prompted reporters and critics to ask if he were paid for the appearance.

Ventura's personal attorney, David Bradley Olsen, addressed the matter the following day, confirming that Ventura was *not* paid.

"The governor heard Brock Lesnar was going to be appearing for the first time with the WWF," Olsen explained. "He was invited to walk Brock to the ring. Since he was there, he was asked if he wanted to make another cameo appearance. And he said sure."

Lesnar's friendship with Ventura dates back to Brock's days as an amateur wrestling star.

MTV or WTV? Judging from the amount of wrestling now on its schedule, perhaps Music Television should become *Wrestling* Television. Aside from *Sunday Night Heat* and the new *Tough Enough* program, MTV will air a sequel to its production of *True Life: I'm A Pro Wrestler.*

The taping was scheduled to occur on June 26 in Cincinnati. Tony Atlas, Shark Boy, and Rory Fox—all of whom appeared in the original—were among those scheduled for the reunion show. No air date had been set as of press time.

Jesse Ventura wasn't handing out meals to schoolchildren in Minnesota on the night of June 4. No, he was making another appearance on *Raw.* Predictably, the appearance caused some controversy in his home state.

WWFE Stockwatch

(For the period of May 1-31)

30-Day High: 14.74 on May 11
30-Day Low: 12.00 on May 25 and 30
52-Week High: 22.50 on September 5 and 14, 2000
52-Week Low: 11.51 on March 9, 2001

WWFE could always shrug off its XFL problems as being associated with an outside venture with little in common with its core product, pro wrestling. That was enough to calm investors for a while, especially when the discontinuation of the league boosted stock by 7.9 percent. Still, a decline in wrestling TV ratings could be cause for concern.

However, WWFE is taking a proactive approach to increase revenues. On May 25, a federal judge rejected a motion to dismiss WWFE's lawsuit against the Parents Television Council. WWFE is accusing the PTC of prompting 30 to 40 sponsors to pull advertising from *Smackdown* through a series of false claims and linking wrestling to the deaths of four children. The high-profile Lionel Tate case in Florida was cited in particular. WWFE hopes a court victory will curb the influence of the PTC—and its effect on advertising revenues.

Based on the huge success of its two U.K. pay-per-views per year, WWFE plans to hold even more. Distribution agreements were recently signed with television companies in France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, and South Korea. In addition, WWFE renewed deals to broadcast *Raw* and *Metal* on Fox Sports Australia and 12 annual pay-per-views on Australia's Main Event Limited.

TV breakdown

Week beginning May 7

Raw (TNN): 4.6

Analysis: The overall rating dropped a half-point from the previous week. No quarter-hour rose above the 5.0 mark. The highest-rated segment, scoring 4.9, was the finale to the Chris Jericho-William Regal feud. In a bloodless cage battle, Jericho climbed over the top for the victory.

Smackdown (UPN): 3.7 broadcast rating

Analysis: For the second consecutive week, *Smackdown* earned a disappointing 3.7. Christian beat Chris Jericho, and Edge defeated Chris Benoit in tainted victories. No matter how one measures it, however, it was a good night for the ex-WWF tag champs. The show ended with an impromptu Austin-McMahon-Undertaker-Kane faceoff.

Livewire (TNN): 1.0

Superstars (TNN): 1.0

Sunday Night Heat (MTV): 1.1

Week beginning May 14

Raw (TNN): 4.5

Analysis: WWF World champion Steve Austin, Intercontinental champ Triple-H, and Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley began the program by entering the ring to brag, threaten, and bully. Triple-H challenged Kane to a chain match at Judgment Day. Austin taunted his scheduled challenger, The Undertaker. Surprisingly, that segment scored only a 3.9.

Smackdown (UPN): 4.0 broadcast rating

Analysis: *Smackdown* rebounded from the previous week's rating, due in part to the strong main event of Triple-H vs. The Undertaker. Austin had blamed Helmsley for stalking Undertaker's wife, Sara, and the drama of whether Helmsley-Undertaker would take place—and the extent of Undertaker's retribution—maintained viewer interest.

Livewire (TNN): 1.0

Superstars (TNN): 0.8

Sunday Night Heat (MTV): 1.3

Week beginning May 21

Raw (TNN): 4.2

Analysis: *Raw* scored its lowest overall rating in several years, earning a full point less than its rating only one month earlier. The overrun rose to only 4.5, despite the most intense television main event in a long time. Perhaps Chris Benoit and Chris Jericho's WWF tag title victory over Steve Austin and Triple-H foreshadowed a change of direction.

Smackdown (UPN): 3.9 broadcast rating

Analysis: Vince McMahon punished new WWF World tag team champs Chris Benoit and Chris Jericho for their win over the "Two-Man Power Trip" by booking them in what was billed as TLC III. They survived Edge and Christian, The Hardy Boyz, and The Dudley Boyz to earn the victory. Also, Yoshihiro Tajiri made his first appearance on WWF TV.

Livewire (TNN): 0.9

Superstars (TNN): 0.9

Sunday Night Heat (MTV): 1.1

Week beginning May 28

Raw (TNN): 4.2

Analysis: Because *Raw* emanated from Calgary, Alberta, Stu Hart and other family members sat at ringside to watch the show. The Harts' proteges figured prominently in the program, with WCW star Lance Storm arriving and superkicking Perry Saturn in the head, and Chris Benoit losing to WWF World champion Steve Austin, Montreal-style.

Smackdown (UPN): 4.2 broadcast rating

Analysis: The program reached its highest overall rating during the month of May with 4.2. Chris Benoit—in his hometown of Edmonton, Alberta—pounded WWF champ Steve Austin with 10 German suplexes in an absolutely riveting main event, but even that wasn't enough to overcome Vince McMahon's interference as a special ringside enforcer.

Livewire (TNN): 0.9

Superstars (TNN): 0.9

Sunday Night Heat (MTV): 1.4

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the steel cage

By Dave Rosenbaum

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING. Nobody I know will ever doubt that Chris Jericho and Chris Benoit are two of the finest wrestlers in the world, and possibly the two best all-around wrestlers in the WWF. But that has been almost a moot point from my standpoint because, well, despite their technical brilliance, watching Jericho and Benoit in a great scientific match has never done much for me. I watch wrestling to see technical brilliance no more than I watch baseball to examine the angle of Mike Piazza's swing, so the fact that Jericho and Benoit really know their craft … ho-hum, bring on the Dudleys and the scantily clad women.

But speaking of the Dudleys, let me just say right now that guys like Jericho and especially Benoit need guys like the Dudleys. If wrestling was dominated by guys like Benoit and Jericho and they were always concentrating on being technically brilliant, then watching pro wrestling would be like watching amateur wrestling, and since nobody watches that, we'd never have to worry about how boring it would be.

Anybody who saw the TLC III match at *Smackdown* knows what I'm talking about. Benoit and Jericho impressively held off the Dudleys, the Hardys, and Edge and Christian in maybe the best tables, ladders, and chairs match to date. The most impressive and memorable moments of that match were as follows:

1. Benoit diving from the top rope and through a table set up on the arena floor.

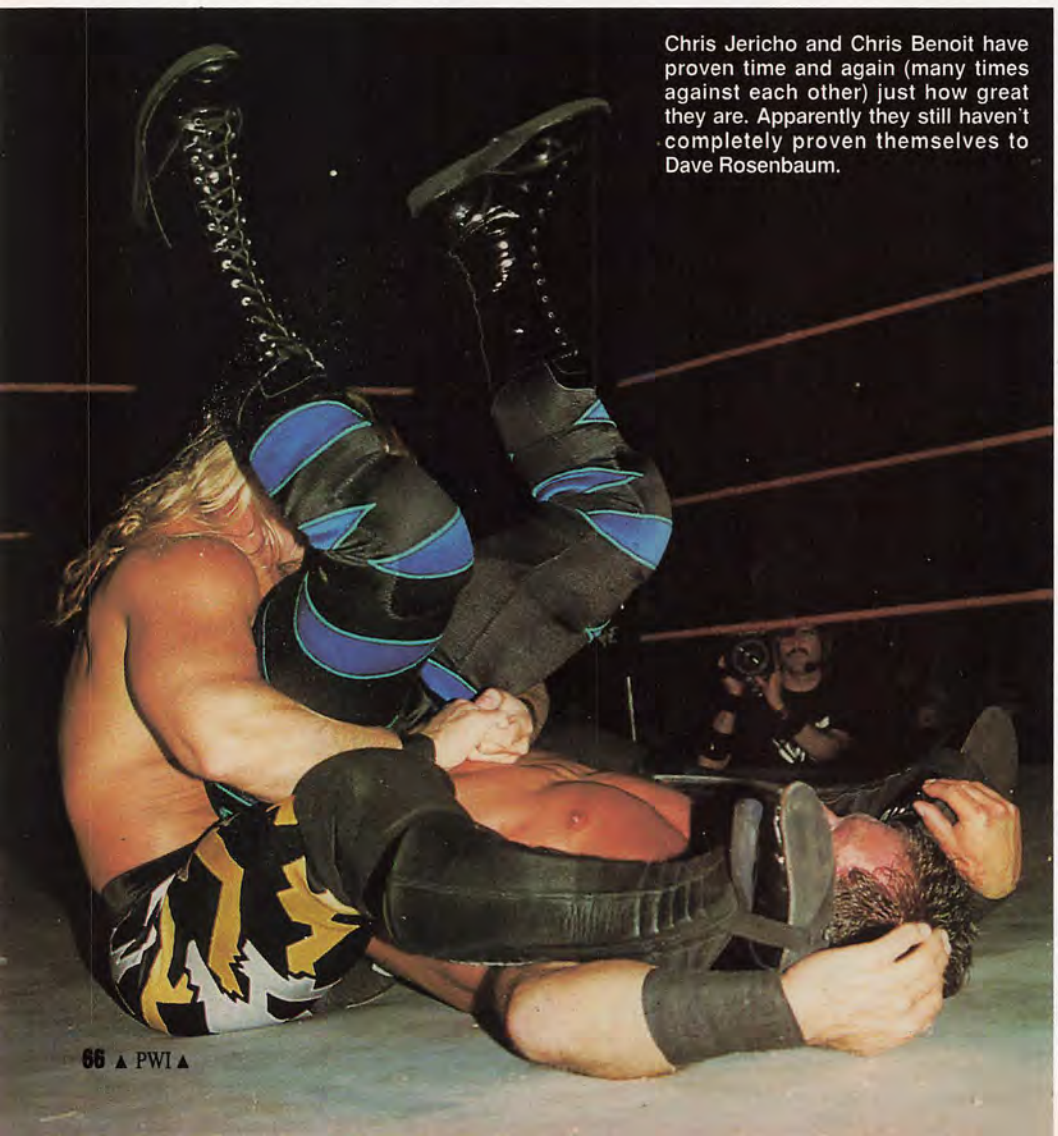
2. Edge spearing Jericho off a ladder.

3. Jeff Hardy (starting near the top of a ladder) leapfrogging over the top of the ladder, onto Buh Buh Ray Dudley, and through a table.

4. Jericho executing his Walls of Jericho on Edge on top of two ladders.

Fortunately, there are teams like the Dudleys who, several years ago, showed wrestling promoters that tables, ladders, and chairs are a critical part of wrestling and can only make it more entertaining.

Jericho and Benoit have come alive in some part because somebody gave them the right props. And don't take this as a putdown of Jericho and Benoit. Those two guys definitely know what to do with the props.



Chris Jericho and Chris Benoit have proven time and again (many times against each other) just how great they are. Apparently they still haven't completely proven themselves to Dave Rosenbaum.

Benoit has done especially well against The Undertaker and other elite WWF wrestlers lately. What happens in the next few months should tell us whether he'll remain at that elite level.

The thing that really concerns me, however, isn't the idea of Jericho and Benoit as fan favorites, but the idea of Jericho and Benoit as the top fan favorites in the federation.

You see, shortly after Jericho and Benoit won the WWF World tag team championship, the WWF went to Canada for *Raw* and *Smackdown*. This was an additional opportunity for the WWF to make Jericho and Benoit top fan favorites. In Calgary, where both men trained to become wrestlers, Benoit placed Vince McMahon in a Crippler crossface as Jericho put Steve Austin in his Walls of Jericho at the end of the show. The crowd went nuts, of course. In Edmonton (Benoit's hometown), Benoit had a spectacular match against Austin and lost only because of McMahon's blatant interference. The Canadian crowds went nuts for their Canadian heroes, Benoit and Jericho, who suddenly seemed to be the top two guys in the federation.

Big mistake! American WWF fans handled a Canadian, Bret Hart, as the number-one guy, but they liked it a lot better when Steve Austin taught Hart a few lessons in gamesmanship. The WWF going to Canada after Benoit and Jericho won the tag belts might have been most unfortunate timing for the WWF, because the urge to push them even harder as fan favorites proved irresistible.

Okay, you might not know what I'm getting at here so far in this column, so I might as well say what's on my mind: When it comes to sports, Canada is a second-class country. You're talking about a place that's hockey mad, but has trouble supporting its own NHL teams, and in the past 10 years has lost two of them to the United States. Baseball? Look at all the empty seats in Montreal and Toronto. Football? Vince McMahon's big mistake wasn't starting the XFL. It was not starting the XFL in Canada, where he could have destroyed the lackluster CFL.

Pandering to Canadian athletes and Canadian fans is not the way to go for the WWF. Jericho and Benoit are very talented, but I'm not convinced they belong on the WWF's top tier just yet. Who does? Steve Austin, Triple-H, Kurt Angle, Kane, The Undertaker … the usual suspects.

Jericho and Benoit? Give it a little more time. □

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win lose or draw

By Harry Burkett

"THAT AUDIENCE—12-to-19-year-old, pimply faced, mean-spirited males—came, watched, and went on to whatever god-awful other pursuits. USA Networks is doing just fine now."

The despicable Barry Diller made that statement to Reuters after USA Networks tied TBS for first place in the February prime-time ratings sweeps. Diller, the CEO of USA Networks, is the worst hypocrite in cable-television.

Yet he's a consistent hypocrite. Diller has long looked down upon pro wrestling, although the WWF was the prime reason for USA's growth for almost 20 years. Diller has criticized, ridiculed, and badmouthed it.

In the October 1999 issue of *Talk* magazine, Diller discussed his arrival at USA in late-1997 and Vince McMahon's struggle to compete with Ted Turner and WCW. He admitted he wanted to cancel *Raw* at the outset.

"What I really thought was, *This is good, how quick can I get rid of this one?* I don't get wrestling. I never have. Of the long list of things I don't understand, this is at the top. But I was wrong. Vince McMahon is such a competitor that he plotted and he schemed and figured out how to retake the franchise, and he did it. Left to my own devices, I would have killed the show. So it's a good thing I was otherwise occupied."

A good thing for all of us. It was a classic example of wanting to kill something you don't understand. But Diller accepted all the ratings points and revenue generated by *Raw.* For three years, Diller tolerated a program he thought had a poor effect on society. He cited the sexual content in particular. "There are taste and prurience issues they have got to watch and take responsibility for," he said in the same interview.

Oh, really? Ever see an episode of *La Femme Nikita?* Every week, Nikita donned her black negligee to lure a drug kingpin or international terrorist into a bedroom for pillow talk sessions. Actually, I think it's a good show, but sexploitation is definitely the hook. I won't even get into *Silk Stalkings.*

What about every one of USA's original movies? It seems like there are only three USA movie plots, which are used on a rotating basis: (A) A woman's best friend is killed in a sex crime and said woman must solve the mystery while almost falling victim to a sex crime herself, (B) A woman falls in love with her stepson, or (C) A woman's best friend is killed in a sex crime and said woman must solve the mystery while almost falling victim to a sex crime herself—and the perpetrator happens to be her stepson.

Diller doesn't owe it to me or anyone else to like wrestling—or to say he likes wrestling when he really doesn't. But for Diller to attack wrestling viewers by calling them "12-to-19-year-old, pimply-faced, mean-spirited males" with "god-awful pursuits" is, as Southern folks say, "uncalled for."

He said that only 12-to-19-year-old males watched *Raw.* He is well-aware that wrestling attracted a much broader audience than that. I find it humorous that he claims WWF fans didn't stay tuned for other programs.

Ted Turner has always been very supportive of wrestling. Why other executives whose networks have benefited from having wrestling on their schedules are not remains a bit of a mystery.

Isn't that admitting other USA programs weren't appealing? I think it's a bogus claim, anyway. *Raw* helped *Farmclub,* which followed *Raw,* and that show had far worse language than any WWF program.

If wrestling is so terrible and so insignificant to the ratings, why did USA use every legal tactic to keep the WWF from jumping to TNN? I'm waiting for the answer, Barry.

This same close-minded approach to wrestling is what led to Fusient Media Ventures' deal to buy WCW falling through. The new TBS CEO, installed by the new AOL Time Warner regime, decided quite matter-of-factly to cancel *Nitro* and *Thunder* altogether so the Turner networks could pursue "more upscale programming."

Obviously these guys are worried about what their friends might say at cocktail parties.

Please, please, give me more episodes of *The Pretender.* Or how about more *Bull?* Wall Street execs having sex in their plush offices is more upscale than wrestling any day.

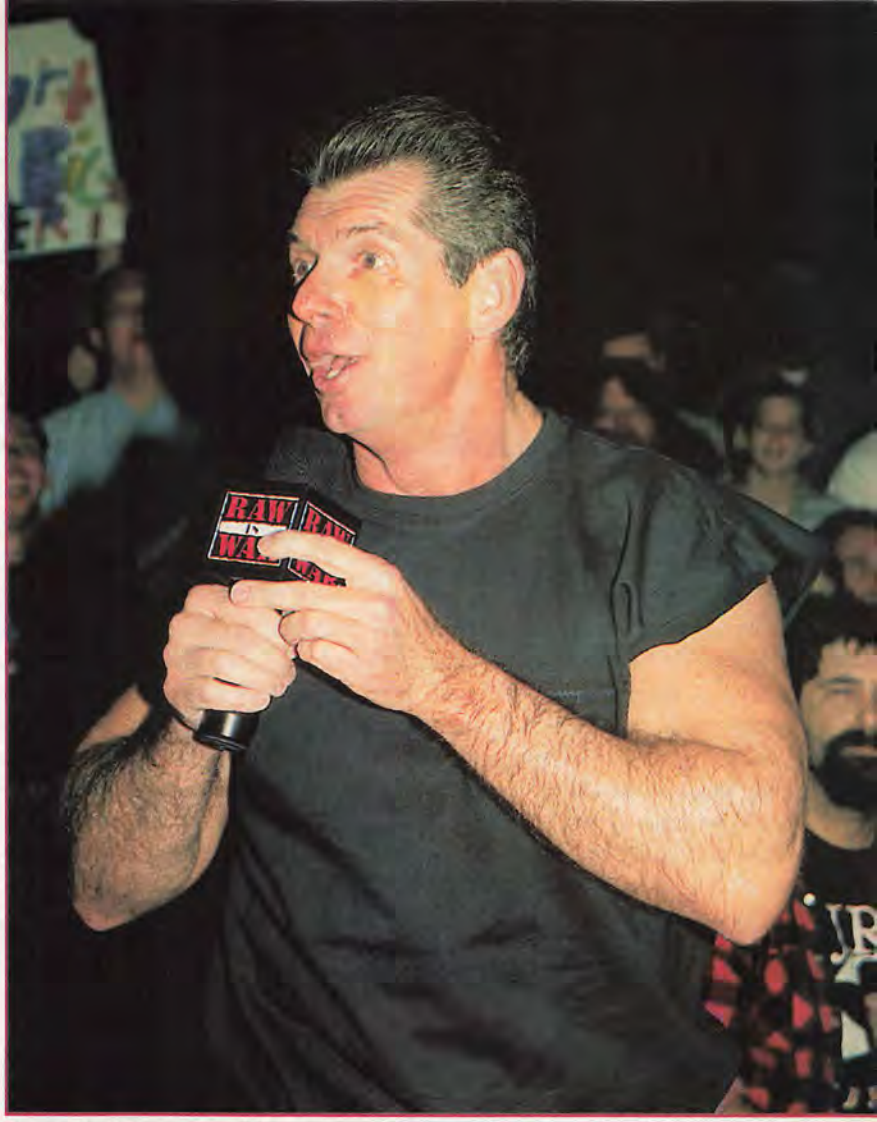
While switching channels a few weeks ago, I noticed *Mama's Family* was still on TBS. Mama was in a wrestling ring in her support hose and orthopedic shoes. In Jamie Kellner's eyes, that must be more upscale than Billy Kidman vs. Rey Misterio Jr.

At least Ted Turner stood behind his product. He has often admitted Georgia wrestling kept TBS on the air during the early years of cable-television. When fans protested the decision to bump Georgia in favor of the WWF in 1984, Turner responded to their pleas by reinstating Georgia to an earlier time slot and even adding Mid-South. After Turner purchased WCW in 1988, he was proud to call Vince McMahon and tell him, "I'm now in the rasslin' business."

Upon his purchase, Turner participated in a photo shoot with Ric Flair, Sting, Lex Luger, Shane Douglas, and others. He was present at the contract table when Hulk Hogan signed to meet WCW champ Ric Flair in 1994. Turner stood firm when Fox's Rupert Murdoch ridiculed him for carrying wrestling. I suppose we should forget Murdoch aired a WrestleMania special in 1995. And Fox is a network famous for *The World's Deadliest Car Crashes, Who Wants To Marry A Millionaire,* and *Temptation Island.*

Turner fought to keep WCW on TNT and TBS. In fact, he decried the fact his business was sold for so little money. Constantly outvoted and outmaneuvered at AOL Time Warner, Turner couldn't prevent the independent WCW from being lost forever.

Every ECW fan in particular knows how bitter I feel. TNN's blatant exploitation of ECW to boost pet projects such as *Rollerjam* and *Rockin' Bowl* became a running joke. Can you imagine TNN executives using *Rollerjam* and *Rockin' Bowl* to hotshot pro wrestling? Not a chance.



Vince McMahon should be getting a lot of credit for boosting the ratings for TNN. And you wouldn't think it would be hard for him to get a decent time slot for the new WCW show. It has been, however.

Why do I mention Diller, Turner, and TNN at this time? Why do I remain upset over events that happened months ago?

I'm becoming resentful and angry because I think wrestling—and its fans—are about to be used again. The WWF went to the trouble of purchasing WCW, but TNN executives are reluctant to give WCW a prime-time slot. The WWF was the key factor in TNN ratings climbing 148 percent among the 18-to-49-year-old viewer demographic group in the first quarter of this year. It was TNN's most successful quarter ever.

That wasn't simply a result of the McMahon magic. Loyal wrestling fans—everyday people, not pimply faced, mean-spirited males with god-awful pursuits—tune in specifically to watch TNN every Monday night. This is the thanks we get? We might have to stay awake past 11:00 on Saturday nights just to watch WCW?

Instead, TNN wants to pursue "more upscale programming," like *Star Trek: The Next Generation* for prime time this fall. Here we go again. □

the straight shooter

By Dan Murphy

MY FRIEND STEVE has a pretty good grasp of the Internet's effect on otherwise-rational folks. Log on, and you have the information superhighway at your fingertips. You can view the collected works of the masters of French Impressionism, or download pages from Leonardo da Vinci's engineering sketch pad, which is absolutely amazing—for the first hour or so. Then the baser urges and guilty pleasures kick in, and all of a sudden, it's "I wonder who I can find nekkid pictures of."

Which takes me to a popular MP3-sharing program that shall remain nameless out of fear that Lars Ulrich's lawyers will haul me to some faraway place and force me to listen to Metallica's "Re-Load" over and over and over again. Give me jail any day.

Anyhow, so I'm on Napster. I'm checking out tunes. I'm looking up some unreleased tracks from some of my favorite bands. And it's absolutely amazing. Then those baser urges set in.

Bobby Eaton and Stan Lane—the old Midnight Express—help out Jim Cornette after a brutal 1988 match. Cornette misses having teams like the Midnights around—teams whose members complemented each other so well and stuck together for years and years.

All of a sudden, I go from Nirvana, Radiohead, and U2 to … looking for the old Midnight Express theme song. And I'm not sure what's worse—the fact that I was looking for it, or the fact there were *three versions* (including a dance mix!) from which to choose.

Of course, as is the case with all baser urges, this is when the girlfriend came into the room and, with a great deal of amusement, asked what I was listening to. Just hearing the old Midnight Express theme song had me all pumped up, and I started talking a mile a minute, jabbering about Jim Cornette introducing "Beautiful" Bobby Eaton and "Sweet" Stan Lane and the beauty of the old flapjack and Alabama jam.

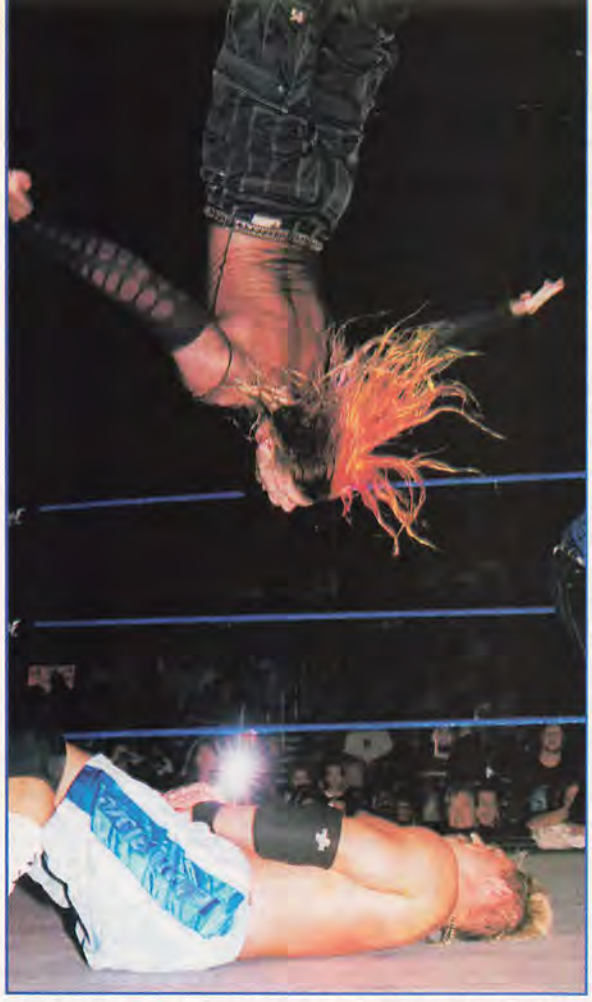
"Now that was a great team," I gushed. "They were always developing new moves, always putting on great matches. Always entertaining."

"Like the Hardys?" my girlfriend, bless her naive heart, suggested.

"No, no. The Hardys are good, but Bobby Eaton and Stan Lane were incredible. Heck, it took them three minutes just to get to the ring—that's longer than most of the Hardys' televised matches."

But no matter how much I tried to explain the intricacies of The Midnight Express, Erin just couldn't grasp it. And then it dawned on me—tag team wrestling just isn't what it once was. Don't get me wrong—there are some great teams competing today, including the Hardys, Edge and Christian, and Charlie and Russ Haas. But most matches these days are so short that the art of tag team wrestling has suffered. Teams don't get the chance to pace a match, to let the progression of the match ebb and flow. Over the past few years, particularly in the dying months of WCW, many teams were just two schmoes (or two stars) thrown together with no real reason. Lex Luger is The Total Package, and Marcus Bagwell is Buff, so—*pow!*—we get "Totally Buff." Yep. The power of marketing.

The more I thought about it, the more this disturbed me. I've always been a big fan of tag team wrestling. I especially love the psychology of classic tag team wrestling—cutting the ring in half, taking advantage of the five-count, working



Cornette has high praise for many of today's prominent teams, including the Hardys. However, he laments the fact that fans are more interested in seeing spectacular stunts—like Jeff Hardy's swanton—than the intricacies of good tag team wrestling.

a body part, choking an opponent out with the tag rope while your partner jawed with the ref, and the famous hot tag to the fresh partner. These were tag staples; now we see the psychological elements on pay-per-views, if at all.

I had to ask myself a painful question: "Is tag team wrestling still relevant?"

To get the answer, I sought out the man I consider to be the foremost authority on tag team wrestling. I called Jim Cornette.

"A good match, be it tag team or singles, is always relevant," Cornette said. But Cornette agreed the parameters of tag wrestling have changed.

"People's attention spans are shorter today," he said. "Fans wait for stunts instead of moves. They watch for something they haven't seen before rather than who wins the match."

That doesn't mean there aren't plenty of great teams out there these days, Cornette stressed. He cited the Hardys, Dudleys, and Ohio Valley Wrestling's Disciples of Synn and WWF prospects Brock Lesnar and Shelton Benjamin as the cream of the crop.

"It's just that there's less cream because there's less crop," Cornette said.

I asked James E. if we'd ever see another era like 1985 to 1990, during which stellar teams like The Road Warriors, The Midnight Express, The Rock 'n' Roll Express, The Hart Foundation, The British Bulldogs, and Tully Blanchard and Arn Anderson competed against one another. His answer surprised me.

"In a word, no," he said simply. "That was a great time for wrestling. You had all those teams and more coming out of 20 different territories. You had guys coming from Calgary and guys from the Mid-South, and from Minnesota and Atlanta, and that was why they all had different strengths, different influences, and different talents. Between them, they had wrestled a thousand different guys, and that level of experience made them great teams. I don't think we're ever going to see that kind of environment again."

It's a shame, really. What we're seeing today is a more homogenized product, and it diminishes the quality of wrestling as a whole. Cornette put a lot of the blame in the decline of tag teams squarely on the shoulders of Eric Bischoff.

"Eric didn't like tag teams. He didn't want to see tag teams," he said. "WCW really bastardized and prostituted the tag team scene in their promotion. It's harsh, and you might not be able to use those words in your magazine, but that's what they did. They just slapped singles together to make a team and didn't care about who held the belts."

I asked Jim why some teams, like the Midnights, meshed so well together, while others just never seem to come alive. And believe it or not, he actually said something I never thought I'd hear—he complimented The Rock 'n' Roll Express.

"It used to be you'd form a tag team and stay together for years. Very few stay together now," he said. "What makes a team work is having two guys working together rather than one guy who wants to steal the show. It's a complementary setup. With Stan and Bobby, Bobby could do a lot of things Stan could never do, and vice versa. And that's why they worked, because they complemented each other's styles. The same with Rick Morton and Robert Gibson. They were totally different wrestlers who worked together for the good of the team. And that's why they were so good."

I hope Brock Lesnar and Shelton Benjamin and The Disciples of Synn are listening to what Jim's preaching in OVW. I'd love to have that same feeling I had as I listened to that theme song each and every Monday night. ☐

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Dec. 1982: Andre vs. Mulligan: The Giant Is Mightier Than The Claw. Also: Grand Wizard, Jerry Lawler, Rich-Heenan, Jack Brisco.

Feb. 1983: Rhodes vs. Funk: The Bloody Horror Of A Barbed Wire Fence Match. Also Ted DiBiase, Andre-Orton Jr., Hogan & Patera, Flair-Hansen.

March 1983: Superstar Graham: "The Hell With Pedro—I Want Backlund!" Also: Terry Funk, Rocky Johnson, JYD-Gino Hernandez, Johnn Studd.

April 1983: Ivan Koloff vs. Ken Patera: The Shocking Truth Behind The Battle Of The Titans. Also: Albano-Snuka, Kabuki, Tommy Rich.

June 1983: Bob Backlund vs. John Studd: The Untold Story Behind Studd's Raw Deal. Also: Jim Garvin, Bockwinkel-Lawler, Bob Orton Jr.

Sept. 1983: Zbyszko vs. Rich: Can The National Title Survive This Brutal Tug Of War? Also: Andre-Kamala, Piper-Valentine, Michael Hayes.

Nov. 1983: We Sent Hulk Hogan To Cover Bockwinkel vs. Wahoo ... And All Hell Broke Loose! Also: James J. Dillon, Race-Kevin Von Erich, Paul Ellering, Reed-JYD.

April 1984: Rick Steamboat Quits Wrestling! The *Real* Story Behind His Most Painful Decision. Also: Masked Superstar-Mulligan, Adams-Garvin, Barry Windham, Ric Flair.

June 1984: Ric Flair On The Defensive: Is Mike Rotundo Ready To Take The NWA Title? Also: Ted DiBiase, Jim Cornette, Angelo Mosca Jr.

July 1984: Ric Flair Brings The World Title To The New York Area: A Night Of Champions At The Meadowlands. Also: Martel-Bravo, Mr. Wrestling II, Jumbo Tsuruta.

Aug. 1984: Junkyard Dog Joins Jim Valiant's Boogie Woogie Brigade. Also: Steve O-Zbyszko, Magnum-Wrestling II, Austin Idol, Sugar-Spoiler.

Sept. 1984: Rick Martel Dethrones Jumbo Tsuruta: Finally, And AWA Champion To Be Proud Of. Also: Brody-LeDuc, Iron Sheik, Kerry Von Erich, Rock 'n' Roll Express.

Oct. 1984: Collision Of The Florida Musclemen: Can Billy Jack Squeeze Superstar Graham Out Of Wrestling? Also: Road Warriors, Flair-Steamboat, Eddie Gilbert, Orndorff & Shultz-Atlas & Johnson.

Nov. 1984: Dusty Rhodes: Champion Of Champions ... And Still The Lord Of The Ring. Also: Rich-Gilbert, Gino Hernandez, Road Warriors, JYD-Reed.

Dec. 1984: How Hulkamania Trampled Big John Studd. Also: Road Warriors, Magnum T.A., Wahoo McDaniel, Sullivan-Rhodes.

March 1985: He's Back And Better Than Ever: Backlund-A-Mania Is Sweeping The Nation! Also: Koloffs, Billy Jack, Von Erichs-Devastation Inc.

June 1985: Sgt. Slaughter Topples Ric Flair—So Why Isn't He Champion? Also: Ellering & Road Warriors, Koloffs & Khrushchev-Von Erichs, Kevin Von Erich, Andre & JYD.

Sept. 1985: A Psychologist Examines "Rowdy" Roddy Piper! Is He As Crazy As You Think He Is? Also: Magnum-Blanchard, Fantastics, Ric Flair, Gagne & Sammartino.

Jan. 1986: Rick Steamboat vs. Magnificent Muraco: The Volacano Rumbles. Also: Warriors & Ellering, Mike Von Erich, Jake Roberts, Koloff & Khrushchev-Rock 'n' Rolls.

March 1986: Barry Windham & Mike Rotundo: Will Their Reunion Spell Disaster For Kendall Windham? Also: Studd-Hillbilly, Rick Rude, Jerry Lawler, Russians-Road Warriors.

April 1986: Starrcade's Over, But The Feud Rages On: Dusty Rhodes And Ric Flair Cannot Survive '86! Also: Andre-Heenan, Bill Watts, Scott Hall, Lance Von Erich.

June 1986: Barry Windham's NWA Mission: Humiliate Ric Flair! Also: Nord-Road Warriors, British Bulldogs, Lance Von Erich-One Man Gang, Tully Blanchard.

July 1986: All-American Special Issue: Sgt. Slaughter, Hulk Hogan, Magnum T.A. Also: Ivan Koloff, Rude-Lance Von Erich.

Aug. 1986: WrestleMania 2: Hulk Hogan's Night Of Redemption. Also: Jim & Ron Garvin, Steve Williams, Rick Martel, Sir Oliver Humperdink.

Sept. 1986: Dusty Rhodes & Magnum T.A.: America's Team Is Not Out For Glory ... It's Out For Revenge! Also: Andre-Hogan, Chris Adams, Barry Windham, Scott Hall.

Oct. 1986: The NWA Championship Sinks To A New Low: Ric Flair Needs 10 Thugs To Defeat Lex Luger! Also: Road Warriors, Randy Savage, Verne Gagne, Fantastics-Sheepherders.

Nov. 1986: Paul Ellering's Own Story: "How My Road Warriors Made Dusty Rhodes NWA Champion." Also: Adams-Rude, British Bulldogs, Bockwinkel-Hansen, Bill Watts.

Dec. 1986: Rock 'n' Roll Revival: Morton And Gibson Regain The NWA World Tag Title! Also: Lex Luger, Hogan-Adonis, Hall-DeBeers, Baby Doll.

Jan. 1987: The New Roddy Piper: Why The Fans Love Him ... But Why They Should Hate Him! Also: Terry Taylor, Magnum T.A., Rude-Flair, Bam Bam Bigelow.

Feb. 1987: Hogan, Piper, Orndorff: The WWF's Hate Triangle. Also: Terry Taylor, Ric Flair, Midnight Rockers, Kevin Von Erich.

March 1987: Happy Anniversary, Hulk Hogan! The WWF Champion Celebrates Three Years At The Top. Also: Ric Flair, Missy-Gilbert, Lex Luger, Bulldogs, Koloffs.

April 1987: Steamboat & Windham: Manny Happy Returns! Also: Paul Ellering, Hacksaw Duggan, prospects.

May 1987: Barry Windham's Warning To Lex Luger: "Keep Away From The Four Horsemen." Also: Steamboat-Savage, Hogan-Andre, Freebirds & Sunshine, Williams-OMG, Midnight Rockers.

June 1987: Nikita Koloff's Mission: Saddle The Horsemen And Trample Lex Luger! Also: Roddy Piper, Adams & Taylor, Bruiser Brody, Scott Hall.

July 1987: Exclusive Ringside Reports: WrestleMania III Makes History! Also: Midnight Rockers, Mike Rotundo, Danny Davis, Ted DiBiase.

Aug. 1987: The Superpowers' Super Victory: Dusty Rhodes & Nikita Koloff Win The Crockett Cup. Also: Hulk Hogan, Lane & Cornette, Mike Von Erich, Adams & Taylor.

Sept. 1987: Hulk Hogan Defeats Harley Race: How Fate Took The Greatness Out Of This Violent Feud. Also: New Breed-R&R Express, Rich & Idol, Honky Tonk Man, Eddie Gilbert.

Oct. 1987: The Rock 'n' Roll Express Win Their Fourth NWA Title: Also: Hogan-Bigelow, Rhodes-Blanchard, scaffold, Kevin Sullivan.

Nov. 1987: Special Fan Poll: Should Mr. T Be Allowed To Referee? Also: War Games, Bulldogs, Condrey & Rose, Dusty Rhodes.

Dec. 1987: Rhodes Challenges Luger: Will Dusty's U.S. Title Hopes Split The Superpowers? Also: Hayes-Bubba, Magnum T.A., Randy Savage, Al Perez.

Jan. 1988: Is Hulk Hogan Bored With The WWF Title? Also: R&Rs-Horsemen, Flair-R. Garvin, Adrian Adonis, Steve Williams.

Feb. 1988: A Special Analysis By Jesse Ventura: Randy Savage Has Wimped Out! Also: Sting, R&Rs-Blanchard & Anderson, Kevin Von Erich, Dangerously-Lawler-Dundee.

March 1988: Bam Bam Bigelow: Wrestling's Most Dangerous Man. Also: Adams-Perez, Nikita Koloff, Honky Tonk, Freebirds.

May 1988: Million-Dollar Middleman: The Future Of The WWF Is In Ted DiBiase's Hands. Also: Zbyszko & Baby Doll, Road Warriors-Konga & Warlord, Fritz Von Erich, Rockers-Express.

June 1988: The Noble Savage: How Beauty Killed The Beast Within "The Macho Man." Also: Warriors-Warlord & Barbarian, R&R Express, Baby Doll, G. Gagne-Hennig.

Aug. 1988: What Randy Savage Must Do To Escape The Shadow Of Hulk Hogan. Also: Hyatt-Gilbert, Sting, Michael Hayes, Honky Tonk.

Oct. 1988: Preview & Analysis: Megapowers vs. Megabucks. Also: Horsemen, Jerry Lawler, Warlord & Barbarian, Dangerously-Gilbert, Beefcake-Honky Tonk.

Nov. 1988: Dusty Rhodes vs. Barry Windham: The Night The Teacher Learned A Lesson. Also: Kerry-Lawler, Lex Luger, Muraco-Valentine, Freebirds.

Dec. 1988: Exclusive "Hotseat" Interview: Roddy Piper—Will He Ever Be Back? Also: Powers of Pain, Ultimate Warrior, Ric Flair, Bambi-Mystic, Kevin Von Erich.

Feb. 1989: Tully & Arn Will Fall Under Bobby Heenan! A Special Analysis By J.J. Dillon. Also: Hogan-Bossman, Sgt. Slaughter, Lawler-*Inside Wrestling*, Davis-Wayne.

June 1989: Finally, Fortune Favors The Challenger: Rick Steamboat Wins Ric Flair's NWA Belt! Also: Morton & Gibson, Macho Madness-Hulkamania, Lex Luger, Jimmy Jack Funk.

July 1989: Megapowers II? It's Time For Ultimate Warrior And Sting To Reunite! Also: Kerry Von Erich, Savage & Hart, Barry Windham, Demolition-Powers of Pain, ex-NWA stars.

Aug. 1989: Your Ballots Are In: Hulkamania Rules! Also: Tanaka & Diamond, Rick Steamboat, Bigelow-Rhodes, Rick Rude, Jim Cornette.

Sept. 1989: Savage Is Shamed By Hogan—Only Elizabeth Can Save Him Now. Also: Lex Luger, Mil Mascaras, Dusty Rhodes, Bushwhackers, Skandor Akbar.

Oct. 1989: Dusty Rhodes' WWF Hit List. Also: Hall-Pillman-Vicious, Curt Hennig, Warriors, Terry Gordy, Kevin Von Erich.

Nov. 1989: Please, Elizabeth—Don't Wrestle Sherri! Also: Mil Mascaras, Dangerously-Cornette, Sting-T. Funk, Lex Luger, Jake Roberts.

Dec. 1989: The Dusty Road Is Paved With Gold: The American Dream Lives On! Also: Ric Flair, Hogan-Zeus, Embry-Chu-hi, Lex Luger, Larry Zbyszko.

Jan. 1990 Why Sting's Friendship Is Tearing Ric Flair Apart. Also: Morton & Gibson, Hulk Hogan, Sting-Flair, Roberts-DiBiase, Lawler-Embry.

Feb. 1990: Sex Symbol Showdown: Rude's Out ... Piper's In ... And The Fans Love It! Also: Warriors-Skyscrapers, Jimmy Snuka, Tom Zenk, Destruction Crew, Kerry Von Erich.

March 1990 (Special Issue): The '80s: A Rousing Review Of A Dynamic Decade. Also: Bobby Heenan, Ric Flair, Paul Orndorff.

April 1990: Starrcade '89: Night Of The Iron Men. Also: Warrior-Hogan, Dustin Rhodes, Buzz Sawyer, WWF shuffle.

May 1990: WrestleMania VI Main Event: Hulk Hogan vs. Ultimate Warrior: Exclusive Preview & Analysis. Also: Jerry Lawler, Al Perez, Lex Luger, Woman, LPWA.

June 1990: Tragedy Strikes Sting! How You Can Help Speed His Recovery. Also: Saito-Zbyszko, Earthquake, Ultimate Warrior, Jeff Jarrett.

July 1990: Our Urgent Plea To Hulk Hogan & Ultimate Warrior: Team Up And Eliminate These Men. Also: Steiners, Sting, Earthquake, Kokina Maximus, Tessa.

Aug. 1990: The Experts Agree: Lex Luger Has Made Ric Flair A Broken Man: Also: Hulk Hogan, Ultimate Warrior, Pillman & Zenk, Terry Taylor, Jerry Lawler.

Sept. 1990: Fighting Fire With Fire: The Awesome Foursome—Committed To Destroying The Horsemen. Also: Hulk Hogan, Hacksaw Duggan, JYD, Adams-Jeannie, Midnight Express.

Oct. 1990: Sting: "I Feel Like I've Conquered The World!" Also: Legion of Doom, Bushwhackers, El Gigante, Mike Rotundo, Juice Patrol.

Nov. 1990: Ric Flair & Hulk Hogan: A Tale Of Two Ex-Champions. Also: Sid Vicious, Sgt. Slaughter, Jeannie-Toni, Mr. Fuji & Orient Express.

Dec. 1990: Halloween Havoc Horror! Why Sting Is Spooked By Sid Vicious. Also: Hulk Hogan, Kerry Von Erich, Jim Cornette, Larry Zbyszko.

Jan. 1991: Warning To The Ultimate Warrior: The Legion Of Doom Will Lead You Tom Desruction. Also: Paul E. Dangerously, Chris Adams, Steiners, Lawler-T. Funk.

Feb. 1991: Our Plan For The "Hulkster" To Regain The WWF World Belt. Also: Terry Taylor, Rick Martel, Sting & Simmons, all-annoying, Stan Hansen.

March 1991: The Earthquake Feud Rumbles On: Will Hulk Hogan Be The Victim Of His Own Deadly Obsession? Also: Roberts-Martel, Sting-Hansen, Keirn-Perez, Barry Windham.

April 1991: The Steiners: They's Be Wrestling's Greatest Tag Team, But ... Also: Eddie Gilbert, Flair-Sting, Steiners, Roddy Piper, Larry Zbyszko, Sgt. Slaughter.

May 1991: Savage vs. Warrior: The Bloodlust Of Ex-Champions. Also: Steiners, Sting, Virgil, D. Sammartino-I. Koloff.

June 1991: Steiners, LOD: Tag Team Thunder. Also: Steve Williams, Nikita Koloff, I-C belt, Dundees, Arn Anderson.

July 1991: Hogan's Burning Mad! Beating Slaughter For The Title Was Not Enough. Also: Virgil, Nastys, Steiners, Dan Spivey, Terry Funk.

Aug. 1991: Are The Steiners Getting Too Cocky For Their Own Good? Also: Jerry Lawler, Rick Steamboat, Warrior-Undertaker, Dustin Rhodes, Flair-Windham.

Sept. 1991: Justice Is In The WWF ... And Hogan's In The Biggest Trouble Of His Life! Also: Missy-Paul E., Rick Rude, Curt Hennig, Stevie Ray, Diamond Exchange.

Oct. 1991: Exclusive Preview & Analysis: SummerSlam '91. Also: Savage & Liz, Hogan & Warrior, Leg Luger, Santana-Atlas, Steve Williams, Studd-Zenk.

Nov. 1991: Our Investigation Reveals ... The Truth Behind The Hogan-Savage Connection. Also: Lex Luger, Ric Flair, War Games, Mounties, foreign objects.

Dec. 1991: A Night To Remember: SummerSlam Provides Heat For The Cold Months Ahead. Also: Alexandra York, Simmons-Luger, Lane & Cornette, Leatherface.

Jan. 1992: *Inside Wrestling* Reveals: Sting's Memo From A Maniac! Also: Freebirds, Blackhearts, Bret Hart, Dusty Rhodes, Mike Rotundo.

Feb. 1992: A Reign Of Pain: Lex Luger—

The Agony Of A World Champion. Also: Bret Hart, Patriot, Rick Rude, Enforcers, Thesz & Rogers.

March 1992: Who's Winning The Hogan-Flair Wars? Also: Steiners, Survivor Series, Enforcers-Rhodes & Steamboat, Johnny B. Badd.

May 1992: War! WrestleMania Will Be Sid And Hulk's Battleground. Also: Jushin Liger, Eddie Gilbert, Repo Man, Austin-Blossom, Tri-State & UWF.

June 1992: Sting: A New Champion, A New Era. Also: Hulk Hogan, Harley Race, Marcus Bagwell, Tony Atlas, IRS & DiBiase.

July 1992: Is Regaining The WWF Title An Impossible Undertaking? Also: Sherri & Shawn, Big Van Vader, Gordy & Williams, Kamala, Joe Savoldi.

Aug. 1992: The Closer Flair Gets ... The More Savage "Macho Man" Becomes. Also: Jack-Badd, Brian Christopher, LOD & Ellering, Taylor & Valentine, Dusty Wolfe.

Sept. 1992: Hulk Hogan's "Retirement": Why The WWF Will Never Let Him Rest In Peace. Also: War Games, Big Van Vader, Kamala, Marty Jannetty, U.K.

Oct. 1992: SummerSlam '92: Exclusive Preview & Analysis. Also: S. Steiner-Muta, Ron Simmons, Eddie Gilbert, Eric Embry.

Nov. 1992: The Great American Crash: Vader Crushes Sting For The WCW World Title. Also: Ric Flair, Ultimate Warrior, Madusa, Warlord & Barbarian-Bush-whackers, top rope rule.

Dec. 1992: Hey, Ric Flair: Stop Whining And Start Winning. Also: Razor Ramon, Heavenly Bodies, Jeff Jarrett, Windham & D. Rhodes, NWA title.

Jan. 1993 (Special Edition): 80,355 Fans Can't Be Wrong: This Was The Greatest SummerSlam Ever! Also: WWF-USWA, LOD, Sting-Simmons, Bret-Shango, Rude-Dustin.

March 1993: Who Controls The Balance Of Power In The WWF? Also: Shawn Michaels, Nikita Koloff, Windham-Dustin, Survivor Series, Rod Price.

April 1993: New Blood! The Wrestlers Who Could Revitalize The WWF In '93. Also: Z-Man & Gunn, Sting-Vader, Dangerous Alliance, Ric Flair.

May 1993: Exclusive WrestleMania IX Match Analysys. Also: Andre the Giant, Pillman & Austin, Great Muta, Headshrinkers-Steiners, 2 Cold Scorpio.

Feb. 1994: Our Holiday Wish List For 1994. Also: Hogan-Savage-Bret, Hacksaw Duggan, Doinks, Hollywood Blonds, Steven Regal.

April 1994 (Special Issue): The *Inside Wrestling* Computer Tournament. Also: Lex Luger, Starrcade, Yoko-Fuji, Ric Flair, Curt Hennig, Funk-Sabu.

May 1994: Lex Luger & Bret Hart: Their Greatest Triumphs, Their Gravest Tragedies. Also: Flair-Rude, Rick Morton, Heenan-Bockwinkel, Brian Christopher, Yoko-Booger.

June 1994: Wake Up, Rick Steamboat: Ric Flair Is Still "Slick" Ric! Also: Jimmy Snuka, Tony Anthony, IRS, Bruise Brothers, Alundra Blayze, Freebirds.

July 1994 (Special Issue): A Look Into Wrestling's Future: You Won't Believe What You'll See! Also: Ron Simmons, Sting, Earthquake-Booger, Bob Armstrong, Diesel.

Oct. 1994 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Doink, Vader-Race, Mabel, Dory Funk Jr., Owen-Bret, Hall of Fame.

March 1995: Predictions 1995. Also: Nastys, Razor Ramon, Tasmaniac, Kid-Man O'-War, Pillman & Hogan.

June 1995: The Beginning Of The End? Will Hulk Hogan Get Burned By Friendly Fire? Also: Steve Austin, Gangstas, Public Enemy, Bret-Owen, Jeff Jarrett.

Aug. 1995: The Untold Truth: WrestleMania X—The Winners And Losers: Also: Johnny B. Badd, Bam Bam Bigelow, John Studd, Bubba-Sting.

Oct. 1995 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Randy Savage, Bret & Cactus, Sting, Diesel, Hawk.

Nov. 1995: One Defense In Four Months?! Strip Hulk Hogan Of The Title—Now! Also: Alex Wright, Tatanka, King of Ring, Chris Benoit, Backlund-Clinton.

Dec. 1995: White With Fright, Green With Envy: Why The Undertaker Had To Bury Kama. Also: Vader-Hogan, Warrior-Renegade, Gangstas-PE, Waylon Mercy, Heavenly Bodies.

Jan. 1996: Our Holiday Wish List For 1996! Also: Scott Norton, Sid Vicious, Psicosis-Misterio, Barry Horowitz, Sabu.

Feb. 1996: Wrestling's Top Stars: What 1996 Has In Store For Them! Also: Goldust, Sherri-Parker, Mikey Whipwreck, Smokin' Gunns.

March 1996: His Excellency! How Bret Masterminded Diesel's Execution. Also: Jeff Jarrett, Giant, Jim Cornette, Survivor Series, Eddie Guerrero.

June 1996: Luger Or Hogan? If Sting Makes The Wrong Choice, He's Through!. Also: Road Warriors, Roddy Piper, Ahmed Johnson, Raven, Al Snow

Aug. 1996: The Greening Of Wrestling: How Sting & Shawn Will Become $50,000,000 Men! Also: Bodydonnas, Giant, Guerrera-Misterio, George Steele, Goldust & Marlena.

Oct. 1996 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Jake Roberts, Yokozuna, Giant-Konnan, Ahmed Johnson, Chris Jericho, strutters.

Nov. 1996: The Steiners: Feasting On A Buffet Of Violence. Also: Shawn Michaels, Sabu-Douglas, King of Ring, Eddie Guerrero, truck stop terror.

Dec. 1996: Three Women For Four Horsemen? The Hot Search For A Fourth Filly Has Begun! Also: Sunny & Gunns, Giant, Goldust, Cornette & Hart, Jerry Jarrett.

Holiday 1996 (Special Issue): The Tombstone: Wresling's Deadliest Finisher. Also: 1997 calendar, "Pyscho" Sid, Benoit-Misterio, Steiners-NWO, Pit Bull I, Jushin Liger.

Feb. 1997: Trouble In Egoville: Is There An NWO Within The NWO? Also: Chris Candido, Bret-Shawn, Ric Flair, Joey Styles, Liger-Benoit.

June 1997: Ahmed Johnson Reveals: "I Almost Joined The Nation Of Domination." Also: Mankind, Lex Luger, NWO, Davey Boy Smith, Jerry Graham.

Oct. 1997 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: LOD-PG-13, Rob Van Dam, Flair & Horsemen, Ken Shamrock, McMichael-White, Madd & Mama Maxxine.

Nov. 1997: WWF War Zone: Interfederation Battles Rock The Sport! Also: Ahmed Johnson, Curt Hennig, *Nueva* World Order, Chris Candido, Dan Severn.

Dec. 1997: Losing Is Bull! Has Dennis Rodman Had It With Hulk Hogan? Also: Steve Austin, Jarrett & Debra, Harts, Funk-Francine, Chris Jericho.

Holiday 1997 (Special Issue): The Steiners' Million-Dollar Gamble! Also: 1998 calendar, Alex Wright, The Patriot, Sgt. Slaughter, Turnbuckle Turkey Awards.

March 1998: Hart Transplant! The Truth Behind Bret's Defection To WCW. Also: Steve McMichael, Bam Bam Bigelow, Steve Austin, Disco Inferno.

April 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 *Inside Wrestling* Computer Tournament. Also: Scott Hall, Marlena, Chris Benoit, Gunn & James, Sabu-Sandman.

May 1998: Is The WWF Screwing Another Hart? Also: Steve Austin, Dallas Page, Booker T, Larry Zbyszko, Al Snow.

June 1998: Exclusive! Steve Austin: The 10 Men Who Inspired His Toughness. Also: Dusty & Dustin, Perry Saturn, Mortis, Jeff Jarrett.

July 1998 (Special Issue): Top Stars Answer Your Personal Questions. Also: Jericho-Misterio Jr., Steve Austin, Sunny, Scott Steiner, Christopher-Michinoku.

Aug. 1998: WrestleMania XIV: The *Real* Winners And Losers. Also: Sunny, Curt Hennig, Dan Severn, Ultimo Dragon.

Sept. 1998: Power Surge! While The NWO Fiddles ... These Men Are Burning. Also: Sable, Ultimo-Guerrero, DeGeneration X-Owen, Rocky Maivia, Mad Russian-Rambo.

Oct. 1998 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Steve Austin, Taka Michinoku, Al Snow, Hollywood Hogan, Roddy Piper, Misawa-Kiwada.

Nov. 1998: Austin vs. Goldberg: Who Would Win And Why. Also: Bret Hart, Dude Love, Junkyard Dog, Helmsley-Michaels, Ray-Booker.

Dec. 1998: DDP's Big Bang Theories: Cutting Loose On Life, Love, & The Ultimate Buzz. Also: Sable-Jackie, Mankind, Hogan-Horace, D-Lo, APW.

Holiday 1998 (Special Issue): Kane: Still Haunted By His Day Of Glory. Also: Eddie Guerrero, Stevie Ray, Val Venis, turnbuckle turkeys, bonus calendar.

Jan. 1999: Seasons Greetings With A Bang (DDP & Kimberly). Also: Severn-Shamrock, Konnan, Arn, Undertaker-Kane, Chris Jericho.

Feb. 1999: Wrestling's Top Stars: What's Ahead For '99! Also: Hogan & Hart, D-Lo, Ken Shamrock, Slaughter-Snow.

March 1999: Estrange Situation! Insider Reveals: "Shane Still Resents His Father! Also: X-Pac, Hogan-Warrior, Jesse Ventura, Billy Kidman, Scott Norton.

April 1999 (Special Issue): The 1999 *Inside Wrestling* Computer Tournament. Also: Bossman-McMahon, Steiner & Bischoff, Hollywood Hogan, Wrath, Blue Meanie.

May 1999: Team Corporate's WrestleMania Scare! Mankind's Title Victory Could Have Spoiled Everything! Also: New Age Outlaws, Eddie Guerrero, Triple-H, Bill Goldberg.

June 1999: Still In-Vince-ible! What Will It Take To Topple This Man? Also: Rey Misterio Jr., ECW, Triple-H, NWO, Blue Meanie.

July 1999 (Special Issue): Top Stars Answer Your Personal Questions. Also: Vince McMahon, Vincent, Eric Bischoff, Giant Baba.

Aug. 1999: WrestleMania XV: The *Real* Winners And Losers! Also: Vam Dam-Lynn, Saturn, Goldust, Steiner-Bagwell.

Sept. 1999: Shane, Come Back! Can Vince Survive Without His Son? Also: Bret Hart, Rick Rude, Ken Shamrock, Hogan-Flair-Page-Goldberg, Tajiri-Crazy.

Oct. 1999 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Mankind & Shamrock, Snow-Holly, Sting, Edge, Flair-Robinson, AIWF.

Nov. 1999: Crash At The Bash! Enter Sid, Viciously! Also: Undertaker-Austin, Acolytes, Master P, Debra, Justin Credible.

Dec. 1999: The Rock: What Makes You Love/Hate This Man? Also: Sting, Shane Douglas, Droz, Piper-Bagwell, Taz.

Holiday 1999 (Special Issue): The 1999 Turnbuckle Turkey Awards. Also: Sting, Dogg-Gunn, Undertaker, Steve Corino, 2000 calendar.

Jan. 2000: Dreaming Of An Extreme Christmas (Tommy Dreamer & Francine). Also: Goldberg, Al Snow, Billy Gunn, Doring & Road Kill, cigar-chompers.

Feb. 2000: Wrestling's Top Stars: What's Ahead For 2000! Vince-Bulldog, Mike Awesome, Sid Vicious, Gorilla Monsoon.

March 2000: Kevin Nash & Scott Hall: Getting Inside The Outsiders' Heads. Also: Dudleys, Jerry Lynn, Vince-DX, Kimberly, Zero Gravity.

April 2000 (Special Issue): The Y2K Computer Tournament. Also: Jarrett-PTB, Christopher & Taylor, Lou E. Dangerously, Lawler-Fantastico.

May 2000: Hey, Scott, Watch Your Back! The NWO Is Setting You Up! Also: Hacksaw Duggan, Rikishi Phatu, Test, Mike Awesome.

June 2000: Chris Jericho's Deadliest Enemy: His Ego! Also: Tazz, Kidman-Torrie, Nash-Funk, Buff Bagwell, New Jack.

July 2000 (Special Issue): It's True! Kurt Angle Will Be Hotter Than The Rock In Six Months! Also: Elizabeth, Steve Blackman, Norman Smiley, Spike Dudley, personal questions.

Aug. 2000: WrestleMania 2000: The *Real* Winners & Losers! Also: Dustin-Funk, Eddie Guerrero, ECW extreme?, WCW analysis.

Sept. 2000: Those Damn Dudleys! Is There An Evil Act Fans Won't Cheer? Also: Billy Kidman, Taka Michinoku, Yoshihiro Tajiri, Jeff Jarrett.

Oct. 2000 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Kurt Angle, Malenko-Saturn, Lance Storm, Tori, Jumbo Tsuruta, ECW headliners.

Nov. 2000: When Will Triple-H Proclaim ... "I'm Sick Of Being A McMahon!" Also: Trish Stratus, Shane Douglas, Hulk Hogan, Kevin Nash, Yoshihiro Tajiri.

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Jan. 2001: Olympic Games: What Kind Of Angle Has Curt Been Running? Also: Tazz-Lawler, Big Vito, Stacy Keibler, Chris Benoit, Kid Kash, Chyna.

March 2001: Who Knows The Rock's Role? Is He Ditching Wrestling For Hollywood? Also: Trish, Billy Gunn, Jarrett-Sting, C.W. Anderson, Booker T.

May 2001: The WrestleMania Tip Sheet: What You Must Know About The Event Of The Year! Also: Scott Steiner, Dudleys, Malenko & Lita, Shane Douglas, Raven.

Aug. 2001: Game Face! We Haven't Seen Hunter's Ugly Side ... But Just Wait! Also: WWF vs. WCW, Kurt Angle, Vince McMahon, Booker T, Hardys & Lita, Haas brothers, WCW babes.

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☐ APR 78	☐ DEC 84	☐ JUN 88	☐ JUN 91	☐ AUG 95	☐ JAN 99
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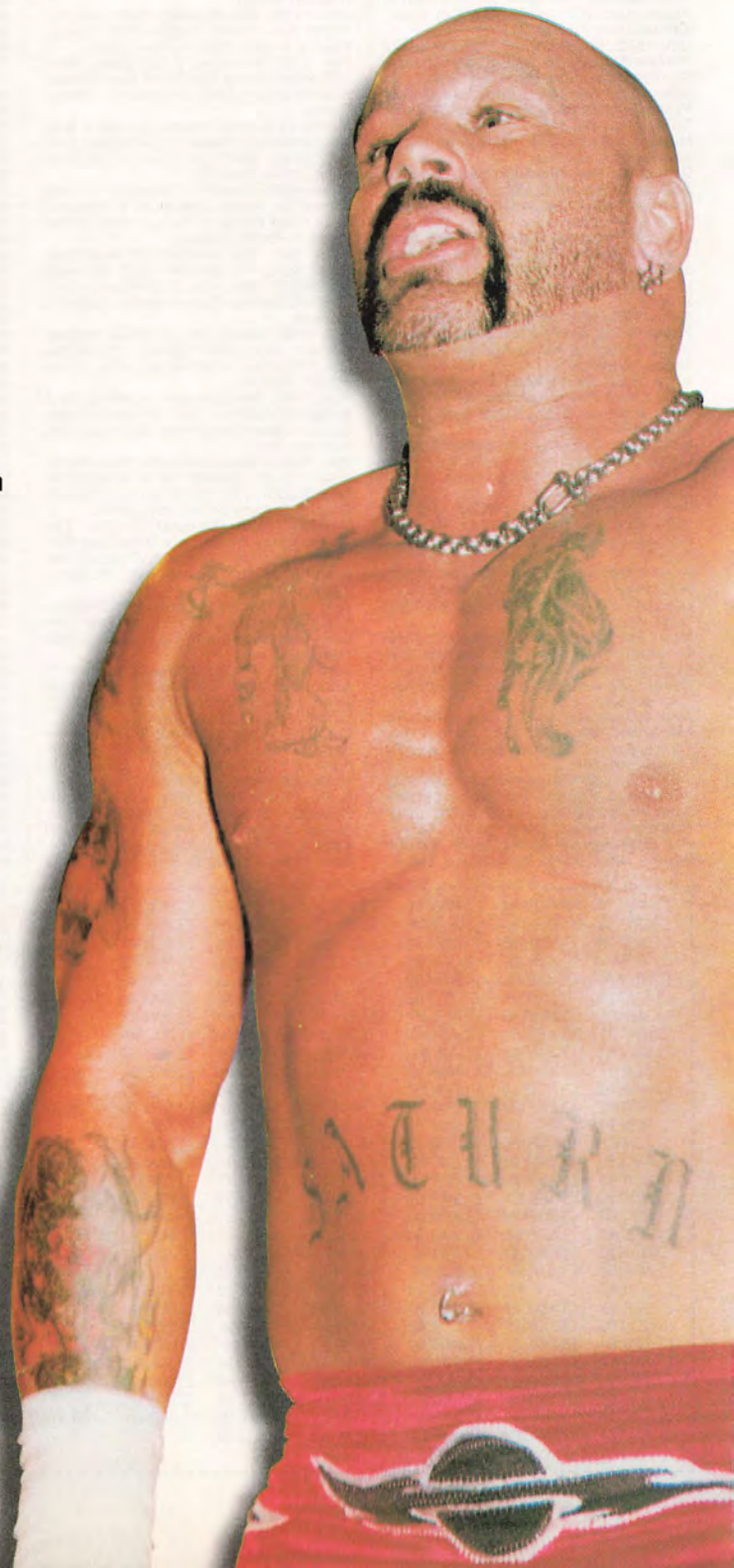
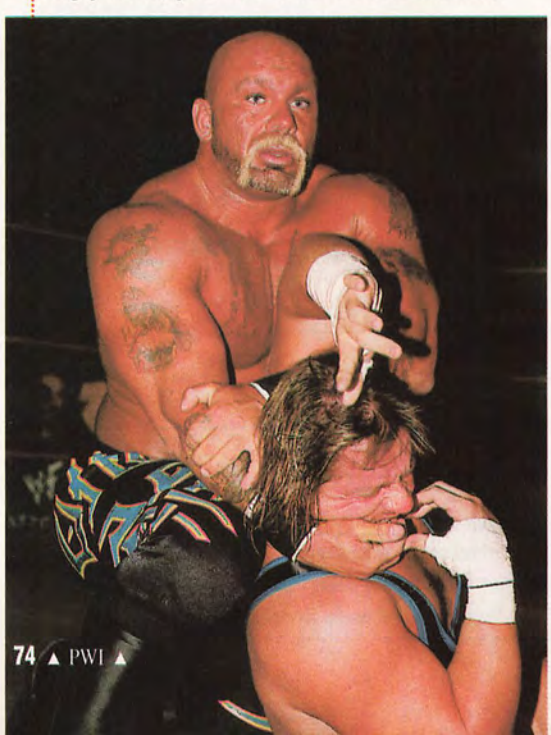
THE Wrestling ANALYST

PERRY SATURN

Years Pro: 11
Size: 5'10", 237
***"PWI* 500" Listings:** 2000—63
1999—47
1998—59
1997—122
1996—81
Titles: WCW World tag team
ECW tag team (3 times)
WWF European
WCW TV
WWF hardcore (2 times)
International Wrestling Federation tag team
***PWI* Awards:** Most Inspirational:
2nd runner-up (1997)
Tag Team of the Year:
1st runner-up (1996)



① Mike Bell found out how dangerous Saturn can be at a recent taping of *Metal*. He may only be wrenching Bell's neck here, but when he's in an angry mood, you don't want to be around him.



THE NUMBERS

Offense (9.0): Saturn's offense is unpredictable for his opponents, although he has the ability to plan several moves ahead. Finding openings for suplexes is Saturn's specialty, and no one, with the possible exception of Tazz, is better at it. Saturn is especially dangerous when an opponent makes him angry. Just ask WWF prelim wrestler Mike Bell, whom Saturn viciously attacked in a recent *Metal* match. Saturn was sent home by the federation for his recklessness.

Defense (9.0): The former Army Ranger is almost as dangerous on the defensive as he is when he's on the offensive. When caught in an upright hold, he drops to the mat and goes for his opponents' knees or ankles. He's able to crawl or inch his way long distances to grab the ropes. He can take down charging foes from many directions with his Rings of Saturn finisher in much the same way Chris Benoit clamps on the crossface.

Experience (10.0): Four years ago, the knock against Saturn was that he was primarily a tag team wrestler. He has enjoyed his greatest success as a tag team specialist, with Raven and John Kronus being his most notable partners. His singles accomplishments include one-month reigns as both WWF European and WCW TV champ.

Conditioning (9.0): His build is deceiving. Saturn stands 5'10" and 237 pounds, yet his tight, well-developed physique gives the impression he's much larger. This enables Saturn to execute big man moves with the agility of a light heavyweight. His abdominal muscles become more impressive each year, but he's not as developed as when he was an Eliminator.

Science (9.0): He is familiar with almost every variation of the suplex, especially the T-bone, double-underhook, and belly-to-belly suplexes. A tantalizing matchup would be Saturn vs. Tazz in a contest ending only with a suplex finisher. His European title struggles with Eddie Guerrero were primarily scientific encounters—and were vastly underappreciated.

Stamina (7.5): Saturn often goes for suplexes too early, expelling energy when his opponent isn't weakened enough to be susceptible to a pinfall. He becomes fatigued, then goes to headlocks and chinlocks. He should use those holds early, then suplexes later. Unfortunately, his vulnerable knee and tibia, though enhanced with a new ACL, begin to wear long before the rest of his body does.

Power (8.5): His tremendous neck and shoulder muscles enable him to execute gorilla pressslams on foes his size or larger. Saturn's upper body strength, combined with his low center of gravity, gives him an advantage when executing suplexes or neckbreakers. For some reason, his opponents have enjoyed throwing Saturn's manager, Terri, into the air as of late. He catches her every time.

Speed (8.0): He's very quick in the opening minutes of his matches but tends to slow at approximately the five-minute mark. A recent series of head injuries has affected Saturn's coordination and timing, thereby hampering his speed. This, compounded by knee and ankle injuries, has forced him to use a more grounded style in recent months.

Ability To Absorb Punishment (8.5): Saturn likes to meditate early in the morning and in the evening. He credits his martial arts teacher with teaching him how to deal with physical pain. Few wrestlers have targeted his vulnerable knee, which has been a blessing for Saturn. His foundering WWF career is likely to sap some of his willpower, making him more likely to tap out these days.

Quality Of Opposition (8.0): When they first arrived, Saturn and The Radicals faced the WWF's toughest men on a nightly basis. First, it was DeGeneration X. Then it was The Rock, Too Cool, and Rikishi. The Radicals are now fighting among themselves, which has left Saturn and Dean Malenko struggling to find their niche. He must do better than his brief stints as European and hardcore champ.

② No matter what Saturn does, he can't seem to escape The Radicals. He's still an ally of Dean Malenko, and he's had some very good matches with Eddie Guerrero. Perhaps he needs to strike out on his own for once.

③ Saturn is definitely a master of many suplex variations, and executing a belly-to-back from the top rope is not easy. One thing he might want to work on is picking the right spots to execute suplexes.

THE ANALYSIS

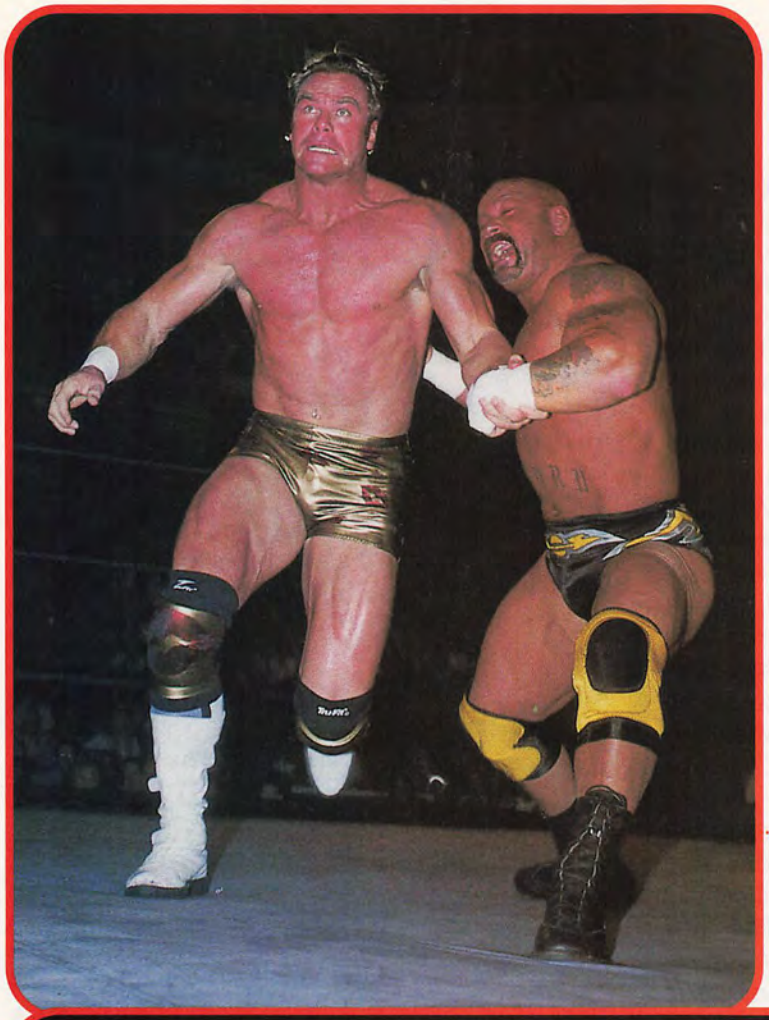
Repertoire: Saturn has been a wrestler for a long time, but it has taken him a full decade to integrate all of the major contemporary styles into his repertoire. The Death Valley driver, the Rings of Saturn, and various suplexes are his most effective maneuvers. His top-rope elbowsmash is comparable to Randy Savage's. His blend of roughhousing and technical skill resembles Chris Benoit's hard-hitting style.

Strengths: He learned hand-to-hand combat in the Army. He learned the fundamentals of pro wrestling from Killer Kowalski. He learned the hardcore style in ECW. The martial arts, however, have made the greatest impact on his everyday life. Being able to set goals, analyze, and cope with adversity are results of that training. Also, he encountered many of his WWF rivals during stints in other promotions, including Chris Benoit in WCW, Raven in ECW, and Triple-H in the IWF.

Weaknesses: His peripheral vision is adversely affected by his lazy eye, making him more susceptible to hit-and-run aerial attacks and ambushes from behind. Saturn also seems hesitant to take the steps necessary to be a top-tier player. Winning is not enough. He must be aggressive, target the elite stars, and force people to pay attention to him. His 18-month tenure in the WWF has been a disappointment. Big fuzzy hats and a bleached mustache aren't enough to make him interesting.

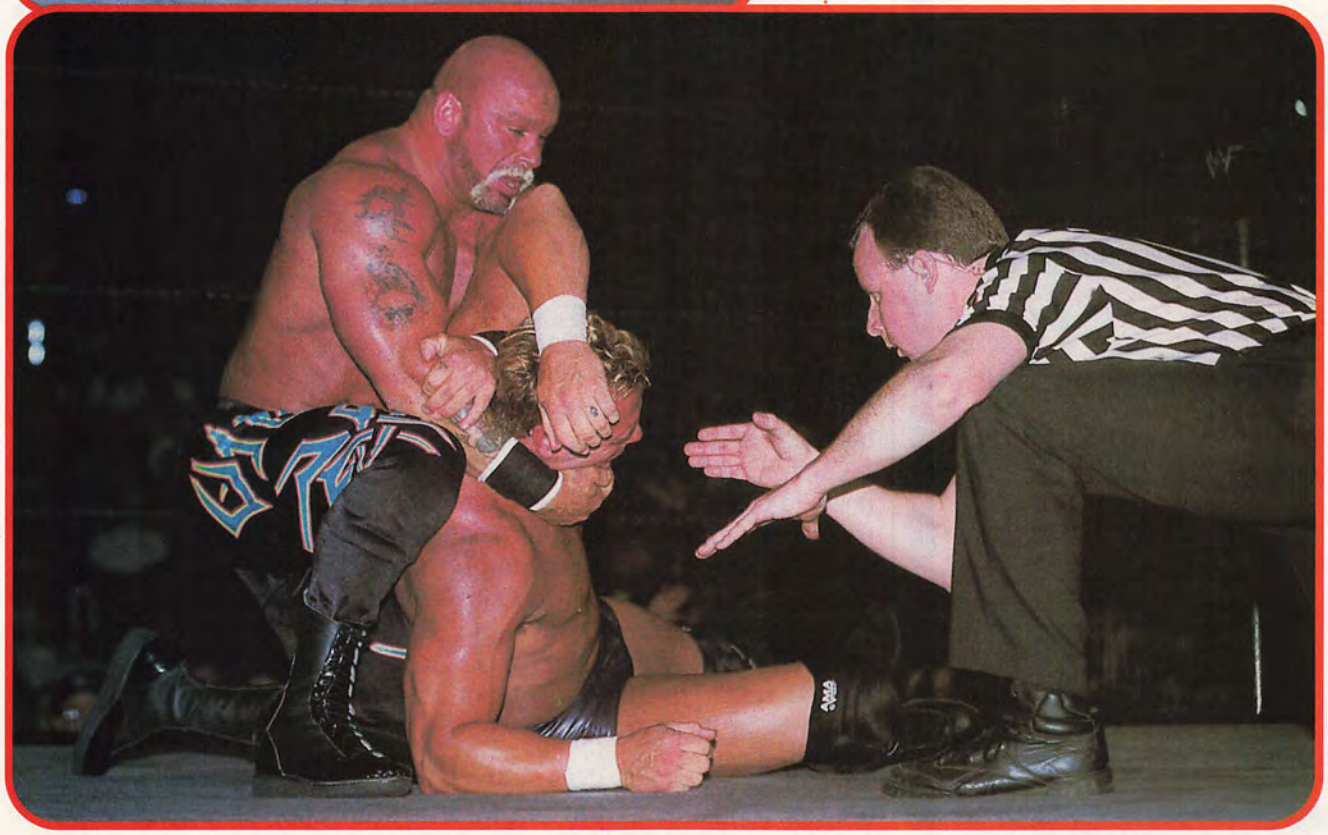
Defining Career Moment: It was a 1997 match pitting ECW tag champs Saturn and John Kronus against The Dudley Boyz. Saturn attempted a front kick on D-Von and landed on a crutch that had been tossed into the ring by New Jack. He suffered tears to his anterior cruciate and meniscus ligaments, along with a cracked knee and tibia. When offered a chance to wrestle in WCW, he jumped into full-time competition before his knee was fully healed. That took true grit.

Future: Saturn's initial decision to jump from WCW to the WWF along with the rest of The Radicals was a good one. But the breakup of The Radicals has hurt his career. Saturn isn't even considered a contender for the Intercontinental belt. Ironically, Saturn's best bet might be a return to a McMahon-run WCW. That would get him out of the shadows of Benoit and Guerrero. Depicting Saturn as a punch-drunk hothead won't get him anywhere—with or without Terri.



④ Bell had no idea what to expect from Saturn when he had him upside-down in the tree of woe. Saturn's unpredictability can be both a strength and a weakness. Now that he's taken some hard shots to the head, he's become even less predictable.

⑤ Billy Gunn has been a fairly regular opponent for Saturn lately, and neither has done much to distinguish himself in their matches. Might a move to WCW do the former Eliminator a world of good?



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ringside

(Continued from page 13)

participated in the making of a fund-raising video for the Parents Television Council. The WWF claims that Lewis' appearances cost the company advertising revenue.

Said WWF attorney **Jerry McDevitt** to the *Sun-Sentinel:* "If you want to run with the big dogs, don't whine like a Chihuahua when they bite back."

Lots of indy news coming out of Florida, and much of it centers around **The New Heavenly Bodies**, **Casanova Chris** and **Vivacious Vito**, the current NWA tag team champions. Chris and Vito have been feuding with IPW Hardcore Wrestling's tag team champs, **The Shane Brothers**, despite the fact that IPW is not an official NWA affiliate. During a recent defense of their belts against another IPW team, **The Snack Pack**, the Bodies were surprised when The Shane Brothers interfered—on behalf of the champs!

You might recognize the man in the middle here as Jim Del Ray, a former member of The Heavenly Bodies under Jim Cornette. He's now managing The *New* Heavenly Bodies, the reigning NWA tag champs. These Bodies are involved in a controversy in Florida.

"Listen, Will, if an IPW team is going to capture the NWA tag team title, it's damn well going to be The Shane Brothers," said **Ron Niemi**, the manager of the corn-fed siblings. "I've made these guys into stars, and I refuse to let politics get in their way. The NWA tag team titles will be theirs no matter what anybody says."

Get-well wishes go out to NWA Wildside wrestler **Scotty Wrenn**, who recently got banged up in a car accident ... Extreme Canadian Championship Wrestling has featured quite a hot feud of late: **Christopher Daniels** vs. **Nova**. Daniels got the nod over the former ECW star on May 25 in Surrey, British Columbia. One night later in Vancouver, Washington, however, Nova defeated Daniels in a best-of-three-falls match. Don't look for this feud to end anytime soon ... **Steve Bradley** continues to impress in Memphis Championship Wrestling while waiting for that inevitable callup by the WWF. Nobody in Memphis seems to be able to beat him for that Southern title.

That does it for me this month, fans. I'm off to continue my search for **Major Gunns**. I can't seem to find her. Enjoy your wanderings. ☐

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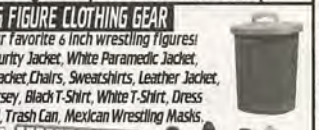

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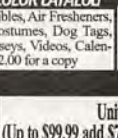

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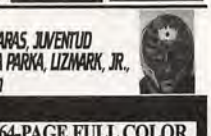

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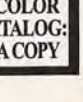

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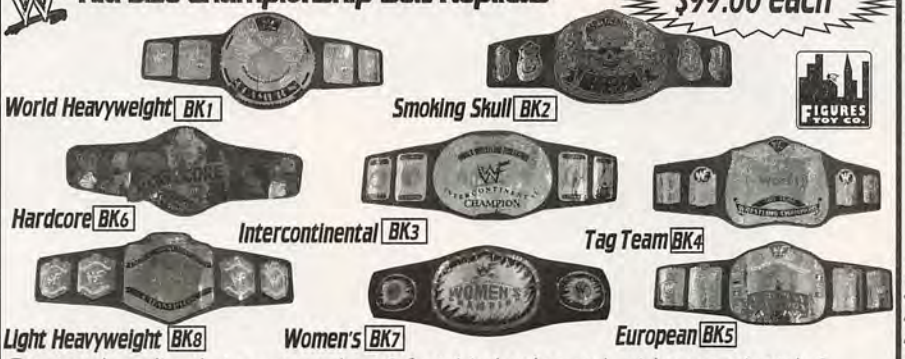

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ODA

12 Questions

You're at the airport. You see your favorite wrestler relaxing in one of the terminals. You rush up to him or her as questions fill your excited mind. There are certain things you just *have* to know about this person. Well, these are the 12 questions you'd *never* think of asking

WITH "DIAMOND" DALLAS PAGE

What's the one thing that even Kimberly would admit you do better than her?

Just being around people. I'm a real people person. She can take it for short doses. I like being the center of attention in a crowd, but she doesn't really go for that too much.

What kind of candy did the Page family give away last year at Halloween? Twix, Kit Kat, and Snickers. It was a pretty good stop for anyone.

Who would win a fight between you and your good friend Jon Bon Jovi? I'd kick his ass.

Can you sum up WCW's last year in a line or two? Good God, it was brutal.

What's the most ridiculous rumor you've ever read about yourself on the Internet? It's hard to come up with one. There's been so much irresponsible yellow journalism. When confronted face-to-face or voice-to-voice, these people who do this stuff always back off though.

What food did you try once and vow never to try again?

Shepherd's pie.

If you had to live in another country, which one would it be and why?

Probably Australia. People are really nice there. There's so much positive energy and it's so beautiful there.

What's the most touching thing a fan has ever said to you?

It happened one time when Kim and I were out together, and she was sitting across from me. I was on the phone talking to someone when a couple came up to us, and the guy mentioned something about his son being a big fan. I shook the guy's hand and motioned for him to give me something to sign for his son. He said his son is in heaven, but that he just loved me and used to run around the house making the Diamond cutter sign and how he would have loved to have met you. It blew my mind just thinking about how I could make that kind of impact on somebody. It was all I could do to hold back tears.

Think David Arquette will ever be a "two-time, two-time, two-time" world champion?

God, I hope not! I love the guy, but I don't see David Arquette being a two-time champion. But you can never say never in this business.

You have a choice between Martha Stewart, Bob Vila, and Jim Hellwig to live with on a deserted island for the rest of your life. Which one would you pick and why?

Martha Stewart. She'd make it nice and homey there for us, plus she's not a bad-looking older broad.

So really, what about Raven?

What about Raven *(laughs)* ... I hope his time will come soon. He's one of the most talented guys in this business, and I hope he gets his big break now.

You have a hammer, a midget, and a roulette wheel. What are your plans for the evening?

There would have to be some midget tossing to start, maybe into the roulette wheel, with the hammer being the clicker on the wheel. □

for the guys ...

STEPHANIE McMAHON-HELMSLEY

BEST FEATURE ...

Her cute smile

WHAT GUY WOULDN'T LIKE TO SEE HER DRESSED UP AS ...

A tough businesswoman. Her combination of beauty and business savvy (and the fact that she has some good genes) would make her an asset to a lot of big companies

FACE IT, MEN CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF ...

Her take-charge attitude (not to mention that wide range of great facial expressions, from pouty to vindictive and everything in between). Like her famous father, she knows how to intimidate others

BUT WATCH OUT FOR THAT ...

Triple-H guy. He doesn't like people getting too close to Steph

SHE'D BE GREAT IN THIS TV OR MOVIE PART ...

The lead role in *Erin Brockovich*

IF SHE WEREN'T INVOLVED IN WRESTLING, WE COULD SEE HER SUCCEEDING AS ...

The head of a very profitable dot.com company

ONE THING SHE COULD STAND TO IMPROVE UPON IS ...

She relies entirely too much on her father to help her get her way or help her escape some very sticky situations. She needs to show more of an independent streak

LITTLE-KNOWN FACT ...

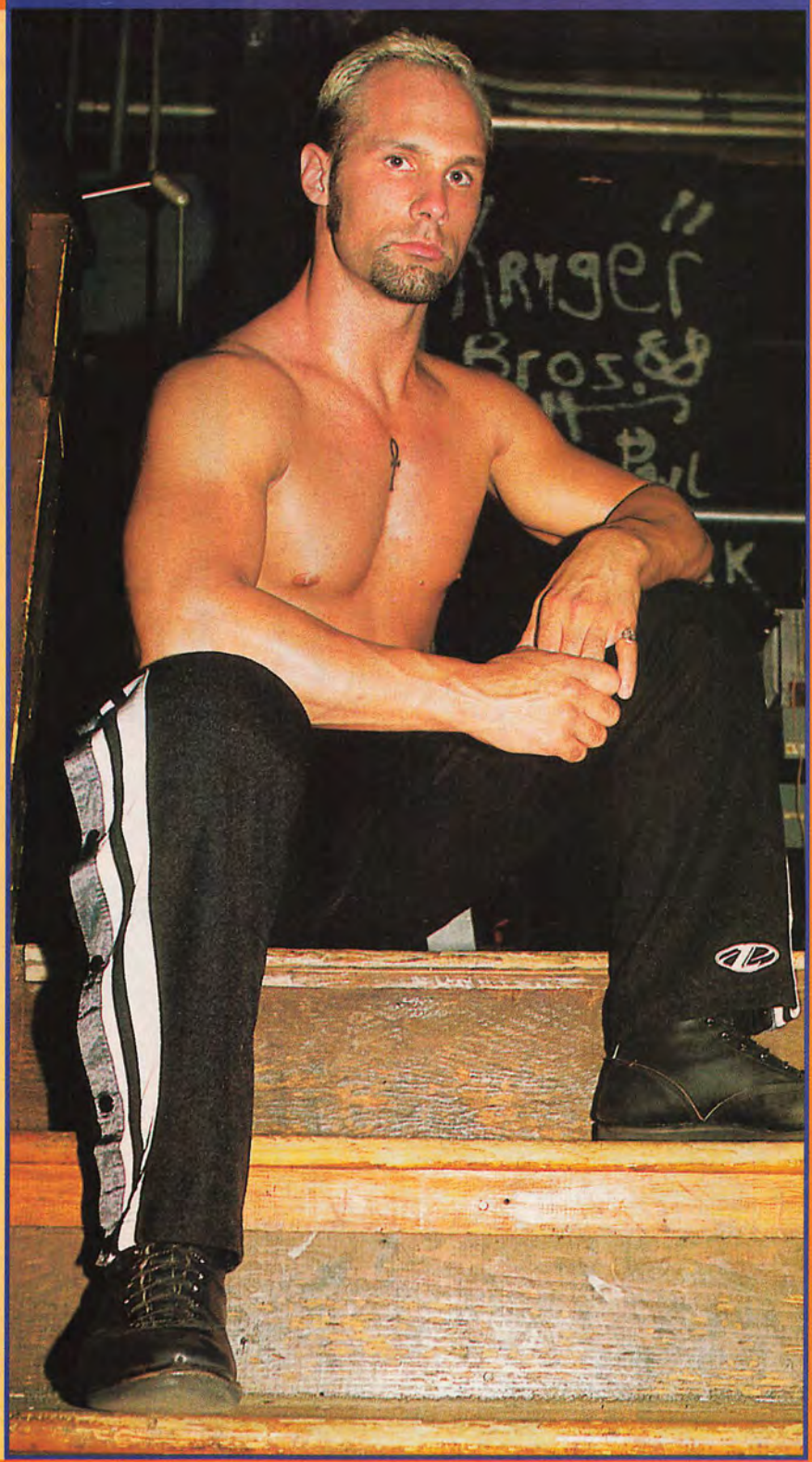
Stephanie is an integral member of the WWF's creative team

OVERHEARD AT RINGSIDE ...

"You think Vince had a hard time explaining to her that when the crowd starts chanting that nasty 's' word at her that it actually means she's doing her job very well?"

for the ladies ...

CHRISTOPHER DANIELS



BEST FEATURE ...

Piercing brown eyes

WHAT WOMAN WOULDN'T LIKE TO SEE HIM DRESSED IN ...

Anything other than his priest's robe. That can be kind of creepy to a lot of ladies who might otherwise find him attractive

FACE IT, LADIES CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF HIS ...

Evil ways. It takes guts to try to pull off that evil priest gimmick, but he does it well

BUT WATCH OUT FOR THAT ...

Cat-like quickness. In the ring, just when an opponent thinks he has a chance to catch a breather while wrestling Daniels, he's back on top of him. He's probably a pretty stealthy guy away from the ring

HE'D BE GREAT IN THIS TV OR MOVIE PART ...

The Al Pacino role in *Devil's Advocate*

IF HE WEREN'T INVOLVED IN WRESTLING, WE COULD SEE HIM SUCCEEDING AS ...

A Hollywood stuntman

ONE THING HE COULD STAND TO IMPROVE UPON IS ...

His taste in gimmicks in Japan. He wrestles in a bizarre outfit and mask and calls himself Curry Man while competing in the Far East. Okay, as goofy as it is, it's still pretty entertaining

LITTLE-KNOWN FACT ...

He acted in children's theater in Chicago, performing in *Sleeping Beauty*

OVERHEARD AT RINGSIDE ...

"So this is that guy I'm always reading about on the Internet. Well, he really is pretty damn good."

Through the Years

It's amazing how drastically certain superstars change their looks over the years. A change in hair color or hairstyle here, a new ring outfit there, a few more tattoos here *and* there, or the mother of all changes ... the total gimmick overhaul. Every month, *PWI* will show you just how much one of your favorites has transformed himself. Yeah, it really is the same person in all these photos!

THE TERRI FILES

1–Meet Alexandra York, computer geek (1990)
2–A sign of things to come? (1991)
3–She loves Goldustin here (1996)
4–Have a cigar, Marlena! (1997)
5–Pillman's prisoner (1997)
6–Purple's a good color for her (1998)
7–One Pretty Mean Sister! (1999)
8–Think Terri saw *Home Alone?* (2001)

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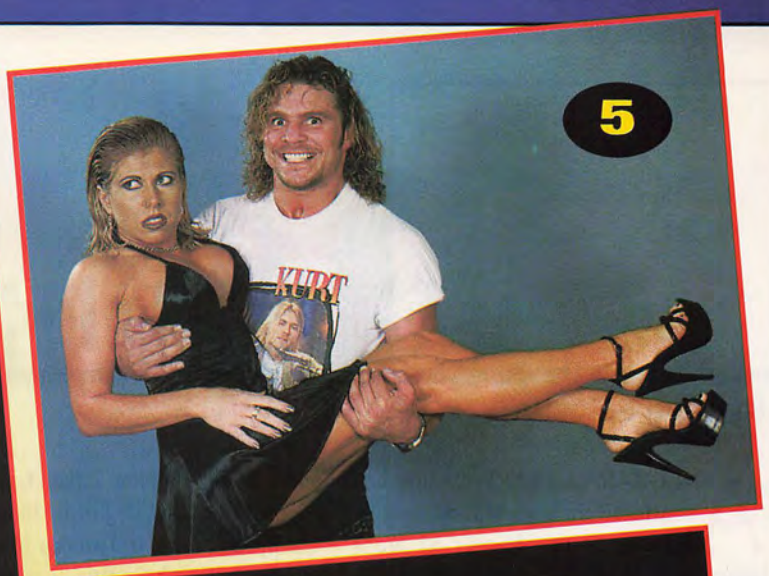

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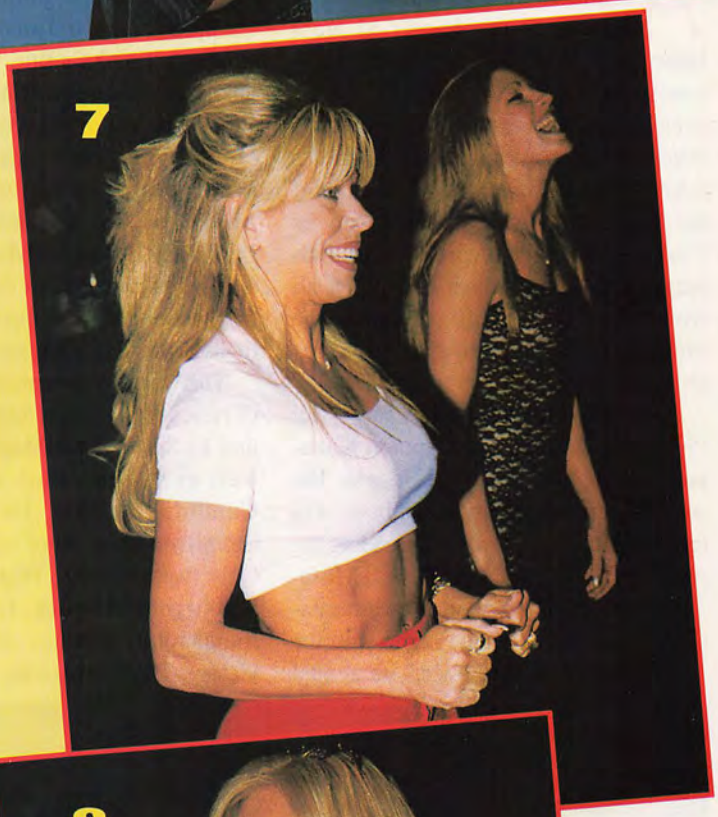
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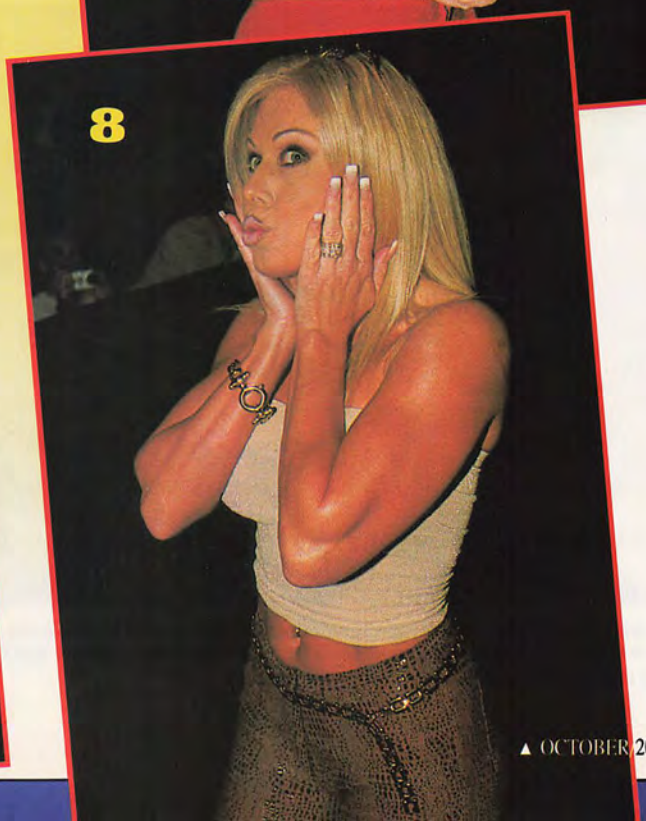
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the JAPAN REPORT

By Mike Spillane

ALL-JAPAN PRO Wrestling has suffered through a good deal of abuse at the hands of New Japan Pro Wrestling in their interpromotional war these past few months. However, a recent five-on-five series between the companies saw NJPW take its licks for the first time in a while. Four of the five matches went to All-Japan, as **Toshiaki Kawada**, **Masa Fuchi**, **Mitsuya Nagai**, and **Masa Kakihara** all won their matches. **Mike Barton**, the fifth AJPW representative, lost to **Manabu Nakanishi**.

The show concluded with a successful IWGP title defense by champion **Kazuyuki Fujita**, who beat **Yuji Nagata**. The next series of interpromotional bouts will feature **Genichiro Tenryu** defending the AJPW Triple Crown against **Keiji Muto**.

For the third time since the tournament's inception, **Jushin Liger** won the "Best Of The Super Junior," an annual event hosted by New Japan. Liger defeated reigning IWGP junior heavyweight champion **Minoru Tanaka** in the finals, although Tanaka's title was not on the line. The tournament win came just days after Liger lost to old rival **Super Delfin** of Osaka Pro. Both Liger and **El Samurai** appeared on an Osaka Pro show, where they lost in a decisive match to Delfin and **Takehiro Murahama**. Even the loss of momentum didn't stop Liger from scoring the all-important pin in the finals of the elite competition.

This year's tournament featured some of New Japan's junior heavyweight stars, like El Samurai and **Akira Nogami**, as well as visiting stars such as **Chris Candido**, **Shocker**, **Dr. Wagner Jr.**, and **Silver King**, all of whom fared well. Only two wrestlers, **Wataru Inoue** and **Katsuyori Shibata**, finished all the round-robin matches without a single victory. The tournament, often confused with the Super J-Cup, is one of the most hotly contested competitions in Japan, and the singlemost important junior heavyweight tournament in the world. New Japan also hosts a heavyweight tournament every year, the G1 Climax, and preliminary organization work for this year's event is already underway.

Mitsuya Nagai and Toshiaki Kawada have a nice rivalry going in All-Japan, but they both gave their home promotion a needed boost by winning their matches against New Japan stars in a key five-match interpromotional series.

Shinjiro Otani was sorely missed in the ranks of the "Best Of The Super Junior" this year, as he is concentrating on heavyweight matches now. The young star might also be looking to impress foreign promoters this summer; talks to bring him to this year's **Brian Pillman Memorial** show have already begun. Save for a few WCW appearances more than three years ago, Otani has very little experience in North America.

While Otani has his sights set here, two American wrestlers have their gazes focused on Japan. Independent wrestlers **Kasey Geyer** and **Shawn Hernandez** were booked for All-Japan Pro Wrestling's summer tour. They'll be opposing teams like **Steve Williams** and **Mike Rotundo** and **Taiyo Kea** and **Johnny Smith**. All-Japan's roster has looked relatively weak since the mass exodus of talent last summer, which led to the formation of NOAH. This team will at least add some depth to the tag division.

Meanwhile, NOAH is about to reach its first anniversary, having formed in the summer of 2000 after the mass exodus of talent from All-Japan. The anniversary show was slated to feature **Mitsuharu Misawa**, the reigning Global Honored Crown champion, in a title defense against **Jun Akiyama**.

Before the anniversary celebration, Misawa was to complete a short tour of the United States, where he planned to scout for junior heavyweights to fill the NOAH ranks. He tentatively planned to make stops on the West Coast and in the Midwest at **Harley Race's** wrestling camp. With talent in Japan divided among so many different groups, Misawa felt it best to look overseas for fresh faces. The NOAH junior division will include men like **Yoshinari Ogawa** and **Naomichi Marufuji**, with more names to be announced soon.

Soo da, sayonara! □

the MEXICO REPORT

By Mike Spillane

BOTH HISTORICALLY AND culturally, the roots of Lucha Libre are in Mexico, but every once and again, we get a taste of it here in the United States. Seven years ago, AAA brought a pay-per-view to the American market and introduced us to the likes of **Rey Misterio Jr.**, **Konnan**, **Psicosis**, **Eddie Guerrero**, and many other great Luchadores. This event, dubbed When Worlds Collide, was met with a largely favorable response, but AAA never returned to American pay-per-view.

However, Lucha Libre has been coming north in the new millennium, most recently to the Grand Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles. Tijuana is a hotbed for Lucha, and its proximity to the United States has helped generate interest in the bordering states, where it is practically as popular as it is in Mexico.

A wild minis match was one of the highlights of AAA's return to Los Angeles. **Mini Psicosis** and **Mini Abismo Negro** faced off against **Octagoncito** and **Mascarita Sagrada** in a highly anticipated bout early on the card. Both Octagoncito and Mascarita Sagrada are veterans of the mini division, and both high-flying *technicos* were featured on the When Worlds Collide extravaganza. Sagrada had to contend not only with his opponents, but a broken arm as well. The more experienced *technicos* still emerged victorious, though, showing why many consider them the greatest minis tag team ever assembled.

Fans really went wild for one of the featured attractions, a four-way steel cage match featuring **Heavy Metal**, **Hector Garza**, **El Hijo del Perro Aguayo**, and **Latin Lover**. All four are popular *technicos*, and crowd support was divided between the participants. In this unusual match, the last man left in the cage would be the loser, so the scramble was on to vacate the cage. Garza was first to escape, followed by Latin Lover. An interjection by the official, the reviled **Tirantes**, allowed El Hijo del Perro Aguayo to slip out, making Heavy Metal the ultimate loser.

For the main event, the familiar trios format was in place: *Rudos* **Cibernetico**, **Electro Shock**, and **Abismo Negro** took on *technicos* **Mascara Sagrada**, **Octagon**, and **La Parka Jr.** One of the key differences between Lucha Libre and American pro wrestling was on display in this three-fall match. The first fall concluded when Electro Shock used a tombstone piledriver on La Parka Jr. in plain sight of the referee. In Lucha Libre, all versions of the *martinete* (piledriver) are illegal and grounds for an instant disqualification. Generally, this classification is extended to moves like the square driver and cradle piledriver, but some moves based on the piledriver, like the Michinoku driver, are granted an exception. The use of the tombstone brought the first fall to an immediate end, and the *technicos* were awarded the decision as a result.

From there, the *rudos* team fell apart, and the explosive in-fighting gave Sagrada an opening to pin Abismo Negro and give his team the win in consecutive falls. It wasn't a perfect night for the *technicos*, though, because both Sagrada and Parka Jr. had their masks shredded during the course of the bout, and Parka was so brutalized that he had to be escorted from ringside before the match even concluded.

Octagoncito and Mini Psicosis put on quite a display of athleticism during a recent AAA stop in Los Angeles. The experience of Octagoncito and Mascarita Sagrada proved too much for Mini Psicosis and Mini Abismo Negro to handle.

Over in EMLL, young high-flyer **Ricky Marvin** has saved himself from the clippers once again. Although he has been an active wrestler for only three years, Marvin has already been in a great number of hair vs. hair matches while climbing through the ultra-competitive ranks of EMLL. Most recently, he put his long brown locks on the line against **Americo Rocca**, a high-flying *rudo*. Marvin emerged victorious again, and it was Rocca who was shaved bald.

Marvin has quickly gathered a tremendous following not only in Mexico, but in Japan as well, and the popular *technico* continues to win more support with every bout. □

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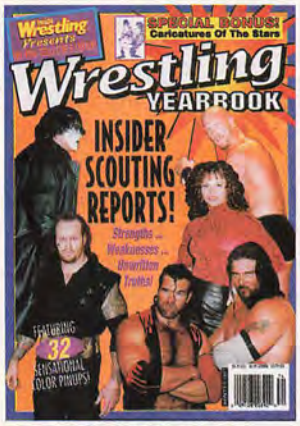
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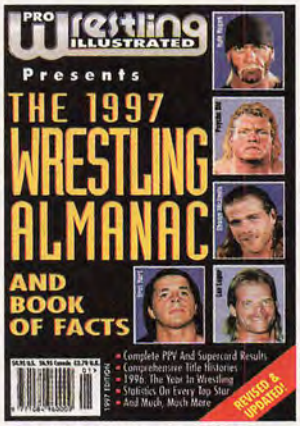

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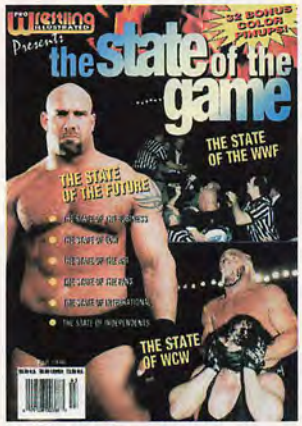
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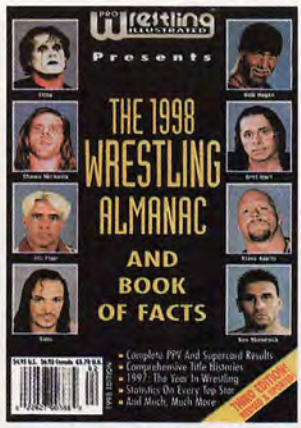

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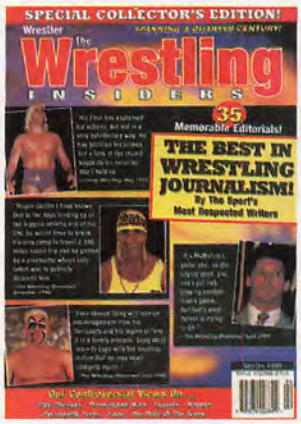
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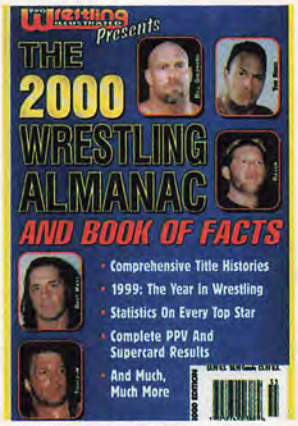
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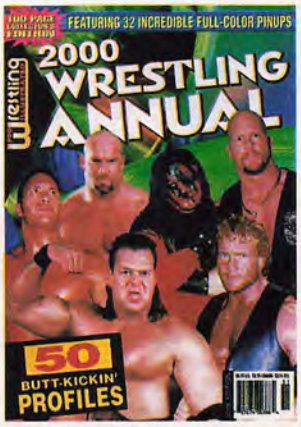

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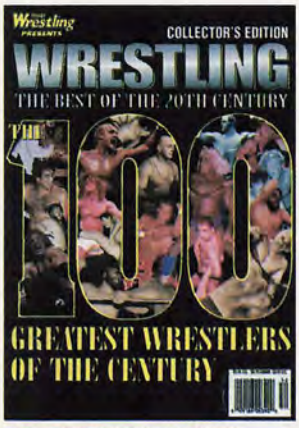

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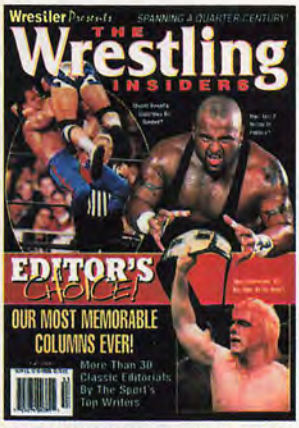

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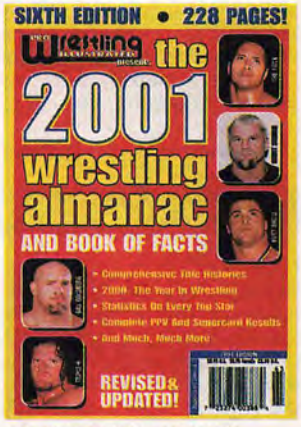

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SPOTLIGHT CARD OF THE MONTH

BUSHKILL, PA—Int'l Pro Wrestling at Fernwood Resorts: **The Patriot** & **Johnny Graham** defeated **Big Slam** & **"Redneck" Billy Redwood** ... **The Hungarian Barbarian** beat **George Anthony** by submission ... **Little Louie** pinned **King Sleazy** ... **Reckless Youth** defeated **Qeenan Creed** to win the vacant light heavyweight title (previous champion **Mike Quackenbush** was injured and forfeited the title before the match) ... **Little Guido Maritato** & **Tony Mamaluke** defeated **Crowbar** in a handicap match ... **Julio Dinero** (managed by **G.Q. Bronsky**) beat **Adam Flash** ... Heavyweight champion **King Kong Bundy** pinned **Corporal Punishment** ... Tag team champions **Public Enemy** beat **The Bad Crew** in a double-tables match.
(05-26-01)

—"Spotlight" photos by Timothy A. Walker

UNITED STATES

ALABAMA

DOTHAN—Turnbuckle Championship Wrestling at the Houston County Farm Center: **Bobby Hayes** beat **Sean Evans** ... **Southside Trash** beat **Jorge Estrada** & **Sonny Siaki** by disqualification ... **Scotty Anton** (with **Daffney**) beat **Lodi** ... **Glacier** beat **Big Ron Studd** ... **Dusty Rhodes** & **Scott Hall** defeated **Larry Zbyszko** & **Steve Lawler** ... Heavyweight champion **Barry Windham** pinned **Tommy Dreamer**.
(05-05-01)

—Joe Slaten

ARKANSAS

LITTLE ROCK—Galaxy Championship Wrestling at the Scimitar Shrine Temple: **Joey Corman** beat **Joey Dreamer** by disqualification ... **James Ladd** beat **Jet Logan** ... **Hank Morgan** beat **Kid Wrestling I** ... **Luke Graham Jr.** beat **Robert Gibson** ... **Koko B. Ware** beat **Brickhouse Brown**.
(05-18-01)

—Pat Corbin

CALIFORNIA

SACRAMENTO—WWF Judgment Day pay-per-view at Arco Arena: **William Regal** pinned **Rikishi** ... **Kurt Angle** defeated **Chris Benoit** in a best-of-three-falls match ... Hardcore champion **Rhyno** beat **The Big Show** and **Test** in a three-way match ... Women's champion **Chyna** pinned **Lita** ... **Kane** pinned Intercontinental champion **Kane** in a chain match ... **Chris Benoit** & **Chris Jericho** won the seven-team gauntlet match by defeating **Christian** & **Edge** in the final fall ... World champion **Steve Austin** pinned **The Undertaker**.
(05-20-01)

—Liz Hunter

KING CITY—All Pro Wrestling at the Salinas Valley Fairgrounds: **Chicano Flame** won a 14-man Royal Rumble-style battle royal, last eliminating **Maxx Justice** ... **Maxx Justice** pinned **Sean Patrick O'Doule** ... **The Snott Brothers** defeated **Sheik Ali Boom Boom** & **Super Destroyer 2000** ... **Jardi Frantz** wrestled to a no-contest with **Chicano Flame** ... **Miyaki Frantz** defeated **Robert Thompson** ... **Michael Modest** defeated **Dalip Singh** ... **Donovan Morgan** beat Internet champion **Vincenzo Massaro** to win the title.
(05-19-01)

—Jeremy Medieros

Outweighed by more than 100 pounds, The Patriot had a tough time blocking this shoulderblock from Big Slam. Nevertheless, he and Johnny Graham went on to beat Slam and Billy Redwood.

DELAWARE

SMYRNA—Combat Zone Wrestling at the Smyrna Firehouse: **Nick Berk** beat **Adam Flash** ... **Eddie Valentine** beat **Ruckus** and **Jeff Rocker** in a three-way dance ... **Jon Dahmer** beat **Z Barr** ... **Minoru Fujita** defeated **Trent Acid** ... **Ric Blade** & **The Briscoe Brothers** beat **The Spanish Announce Team** ... **Trent Acid** defeated **Johnny Kashmere** ... **Zandig** beat **W. Beater** to win the heavyweight championship.
(05-12-01)

—Lyle Braun

George Anthony could only muster a close two-count on this pin attempt against The Hungarian Barbarian. That was the closest Anthony got to winning the match before he was ultimately forced to submit.

FLORIDA

TAMPA—NWA Florida at the Homer W. Hesterly Armory: NWA Florida junior heavyweight champion **Lex Lovett** defeated **Jamie Knoble** ... **"Bruiser" Chris Layton** defeated **"Uptown" Frankie Capon** ... **Pepe Prado** beat **"Marvelous" Mike Sullivan** ... **Cyborg** beat **Hack Myers** ... IPW heavyweight champ **Scoot Andrews** pinned **Townes** (substituting for **Billy Fives**) ... NWA Florida heavyweight champion **Iceman Buck Q** pinned **Tommy Dreamer** ... NWA tag team champions **The New Heavenly Bodies** defeated **The Snack Pack**.
(05-29-01)

—Douglas Ford

ST. PETERSBURG—IPW Hardcore Wrestling's second annual "May Massacre" at the Florida Wrestleplex: NWA tag team champions **The New Heavenly Bodies** defeated **Yassar Arafat Jr.** & **Agent Steele** ... IPW tag team champs **The Shane Twins** defeated **The Market Crashers** ... NWA Florida junior heavyweight champion **Lex Lovett** pinned **Jet Jaguar** ... **Seijin Akki** defeated IPW light heavyweight champion **Scoot Andrews** and **Jayson Reign** in a three-way dance to win the title ... **"Marvelous" Mike Sullivan** pinned **Judas Young** ... **Devin** & **Stormtrooper** defeated **Axis** & **Pat McGroin** (**Luciano Bonetti** was the special referee) ... **Wrongful Death** defeated **Kamikaze Kid**, **Special Ed**, & **Bug Naphtali**.
(05-19-01)

—Mike Fischer

GEORGIA

JEFFERSONVILLE—NWA Wildside at Macon National Dragway Park: **Mark E. Mark** beat **Cru Jones** ... **Blackout** and **TNT** wrestled to a no-contest ... **Kid Ecstasy** defeated **White Trash** by disqualification ... **Jamie Knoble** defeated **Jeremy Lopez** ... Junior heavyweight champion **Jimmy Rave** defeated **Jason Cross** by disqualification when **Blackout** interfered ... **Twisted** pinned **Rick Michaels** ... **Mark Jindrak** defeated **Scottie Wren** ... **Tommy "Wildfire" Rich** defeated **Terry Knight**.
(05-26-01)

—Dave Whitaker

CORNELIA—NWA Wildside at the NCW Arena: **"Outlaw" John Dalton** beat **Corporal Cooter** ... **Jeremy Lopez**, **Kross**, & **Kid Ecstasy** beat **Cru Jones**, **Crazy Train**, & **Big Henry Hoss** ... **David Young** beat **Lazz** ... **Total Destruction** beat **Ink Inc.** ... **Dylan Reigns** & **Mike Pittman** wrestled to no-contest with **Twisted** & **Kid Kool** ... Junior heavyweight champion **Jimmy Rave** beat **Caprice Coleman** ... **Jason Cross** beat **Dango Wynn** ... **Blackout** beat **TNT** ... **Rick Michaels** beat **Terry Knight** ... **John Phoenix** defeated **A.J. Styles**.
(05-19-01)

—L.A. Goodman

WINDER—Future Wrestling Federation at American Legion Post 55: **Felix Studley** beat **Seth Cruz** ... **Danny Horne** & **Jake Slater** beat **Billy the Kidd** & **Wardawg** ... **Kevin Rude** beat **Blues Brother** ... **Terry Simms** beat **Infamous D** in a lumberjack strap match ... **Iceman** beat cruiserweight champ **Kid Falcon** for the title ... **Eli the Killa Klown** beat **Leatherface** in a loser-leaves-town match ... **Iceman**, **Sean Lee**, **Infamous D**, & **Iceberg Slim** beat **The Studleys**.
(05-11-01)

—John Johnson

LAWRENCEVILLE—NCWA at the National Guard Armory: **Beautiful Bruce** beat **Pretty Boy Floyd** ... **Silky Boom Boom** beat **Problem Child** ... **Rob Adonis** beat **Alexander the Great** by disqualification ... **Dark Gable** beat **Iceman** ... **Billy the Kid** & **Jamie Dean** beat **Infamous D** & **Danny Horne** ... **T.C. Carter** beat **Mr. Hughes** ... **Colt Derringer** and **J-Lo** wrestled to a no-contest.
(05-04-01)

—John Johnson

HAWAII

HILO—Hawaii Pro Wrestling at the Afook-Chinen Civic Auditorium: **Shin Ku** beat **Rage** ... **Don Da Bomb** defeated **Metal Maniac** ... **Kid Krippla** defeated **Chaos** ... **The Polynesian Kid** defeated **Roadkill** ... **Manu the Samoan** pinned **The Gravedigger** ... South Pacific champion **Lightning Leni** beat **Ladies Choice**.
(05-19-01)

—Baba Marantan

INDIANA

SOUTH BEND—IAW at the Century Center: **Deputy Dogg** beat **Ray Orndorff** ... **Cousin Bubba** beat **Vincent** ... **D-2000** defeated **The Cole Brothers** ... **Nasty Nick** & **The Ripper** beat **Shockwave** ... Tag team champs **Crippler Costello** & **Andy Chene** beat **Jimmy Snuka** & **Bobo Brazil Jr.** ... Heavyweight champion **Crippler Costello** defeated **King Kong Bundy** in a steel cage match.
(05-20-01)

—Rudy Landers

INDIANAPOLIS—Wild Championship Wrestling Outlaws at the Ramada Inn: **Dozer** & **Johnny Blaze** defeated **The Shadow Riders** ... **Charley Boy** beat **The Black Widow** ... Women's champion **Angelfire** defeated **Whipme Spears** ... **Billy Bart** beat **Uncle Ernie** ... Women's champion **Angelfire** pinned **Drucilla Davie** ... **Itch Coma Weider** beat **Tony Saturday Night**, then painted his hair green ... **Indiana Kidd Jr.** defeated **The Spyder** ... **Sgt. Ed Wilson** defeated heavyweight champion **Don Basher** by disqualification.
(05-04-01)

—Randy Klemme

IOWA

KEOKUK—World League Wrestling at the High School: **Superstar Steve** defeated **Deputy Dale** ... **Ace Steele** beat **Butch McLain** ... **"Wild" Wade Chism** beat **War Cloud** ... **Matt Murphy** defeated **Trevor Rhodes** in a first-blood match ... Heavyweight champion **Butch Reed** beat **Bull**

King Sleazy still fondly recalls the 1994 Survivor Series, the event at which he, two other midgets, and Jerry Lawler beat Doink and three of his midget pals. He won't necessarily have fond memories of his loss to Little Louie.

Schmitt ... **The Predator** won an eight-man battle royal, last eliminating **Matt Murphy**.
(05-12-01)

—William Gasten

KENTUCKY

CARLISLE—Central Wrestling Alliance at the National Guard Armory: **Psychomaniac** defeated **Bombay Warrior** ... **Miss Diamond** defeated **The Japanese Warrior** by disqualification ... **Terry Alan** pinned **Shane Lewis** ... **Tommy Green** wrestled to a double-countout with **The Flying Angel** ... **Terry Alan** won a 12-man battle royal.
(05-26-01)

—Greg Harnisch

BLAINE—National Pro Wrestling at the Elementary School: **Dealer** pinned **Old School Superstar** ... **Jake Layton** and **Venus** fought to a double-disqualification ... **Thorn** pinned **Dan Landel** ... **Jason Jett** pinned **Ian Killjoy** ... **Chris Draven** and **Flying Death** fought to a double-countout ... **Mike Sledge** won a 15-man battle royal ... **Jason Jett** pinned **Thorn** to become the first-ever National Pro Wrestling heavyweight champion.
(05-11-01)

—Andrew Sparkman

DANVILLE—Bad 2 the Bone Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **PsychoDelic** wrestled **BioHazard** to a double-disqualification ... **Manslaughter** pinned **Vito Andretti** ... **Guido Andretti** defeated **Chuck Lee** ... **Billy Black** pinned **Bart McQueary** ... Heavyweight champ **Ox Harley** beat **J.D. Biggs**.
(05-11-01)

—Ron Fredericks

MAINE

PORTLAND—Eastern Wrestling Alliance at the Stevens Street Armory: **Jay Jaillette** beat **G.Q. Smooth** ... **The Damned** beat **Frankie Armadillo** & **Killdevil** ... **Jeff Taylor** beat **El Tornado** ... Hardcore champion **Larry Huntley** & **The Hardcore Honey** defeated **Dr. Heresy** & **Bambi** in a mixed tag team hardcore match ... **Rick Fuller** beat **Johnny Idol** by disqualification ... Tag team champs **The Asian Contingent** defeated **Damian Houston** & **Steve Ramsey** and **The Shooters** in a three-way dance ... **Don Juan DeSanto** pinned **Mike Steele** in the finals of the heavyweight title tournament to become the new champion ... **Adam Hastey** beat **Aleaxander Worthington III** in a retirement match.
(05-11-01)

—Jeremy Barron

MARYLAND

WYE MILLS—Maryland Championship Wrestling at Chesapeake College: Cruiserweight champion **Qeenan Creed** defeated **Chad Bowman** ... **Julio Dinero** defeated **Doug Delicious** ... **The Bruiser** beat **Dino Divine** ... **Candie** & **Alexis Laree** beat **Colleen** & **Tara** ... Tag team champions **Ronnie Zukko** & **Romeo Valentino** beat **2 Dope** & **Sideswype** ... TV champ **Billy Redwood** pinned **Marcus Jordan** ... **Gillberg** & **Van Hammer** defeated **Earl the Pearl** & **"Ramblin'" Rich Myers** ... **Adam Flash** pinned heavyweight champion **Jimmy Cicero** to win the title.
(05-18-01)

—Timothy A. Walker

MASSACHUSETTS

NATICK—Northeast Championship Wrestling at the American Legion Hall: **Adam Booker** beat **Brian Black** ... **Randy J** pinned **Damian Houston** ... **The Damned** beat **Mind & Matter** to win the vacant tag team title ... **Richard Pacifico** beat **Johnny Nash** ... **The Phoenix Brothers** won a tag team battle royal also involving **The Stretcher Crew**, **The Playas Club**, and **Maniacal Mark** & **El Pequito** ... **Kid Krazy** beat **Ray Batello** and **Frankie Armadillo** in a three-way dance ... **Onyx** defeated **Cinna** ... **K.L. Murphy** beat **Tim Kilgore** in a last-man-standing match to win the New England title ... **Triplelicious** beat **Chris Venom** to win the heavyweight title.
(05-27-01)

—Adam Wilkes

NATICK—Atlantic Wrestling Federation at the High School: **Abunai** pinned **The HiLight Kid** ... **Frankie Armadillo** beat **Suicidal Silva** ... **Damian Houston** beat **Robbie Ellis** and **Johnny Nash** in a three-way dance ... **Don Juan DeSanto** (with **Capt. Lou Albano**) pinned **Mike Foster** ... **Brickhouse Baker** beat **Dr. Heresy** ... **The HiLight Kid** pinned **Brian Black** ... **The Hott Boyz** defeated **The Damned** ... **D.J. Hott** won a battle royal.
(05-12-01)

—Jeremy Barron

NEW JERSEY

WEST PATERSON—IWF at the Camp IWF Center: Heavyweight champion **Kevin Knight** pinned **Josh Daniels** ... **Rob Eckos** beat **Hadrian** by disqualification ... **Kevin Kage** pinned **Pete Salvatore** ... **Tony Balboa** beat **Shane O'Brien** ... **P.W. Stryker** defeated **Eloy Fiesta** by submission ... **Biggie Biggs**, **Roman**, & **Josh Daniels** beat **Damian Adams**, **Mr. Mike Winner**, & **Hadrian**.
(05-20-01)

—Dorothy Podsvirow

BAYONNE—Jersey All Pro Wrestling at the Charity Hall: **Don Montoya** defeated **Don Bon Jovi** ... **Chino Martinez** defeated **Dave Grecco** ... **Low-Ki** defeated **The Christopher Street Connection** ... **Skinhead Ivan** defeated **Jerry Tudisco** ... **Dixie** pinned **Mafia** ... **Ric Blade** defeated **Abuni** & **The Exploited Child** in a handicap match ... **Homicide** defeated **J-Train** by submission ... **The Insane Dragon** defeated **Monsta Mac** ... **The Insane Dragon** & **Dixie** defeated **The Hit Squad** to capture the tag team championship.
(05-18-01)

—Paul Brewer

NEW YORK

MIDDLETOWN—North American Wrestling Alliance at the Orange County Fairgrounds: **Crowbar** defeated **Inferno Kid** ... **Phoenix** defeated **Mike Bell** ... **"Jackmaster" Jon Diamond** pinned **The Mighty Finn** ... **Bobcat** defeated **Little Jeannie** ... **"Roughhouse" Ralph Mosca** defeated **T.W. Sledge** ... **Chris Chetti** pinned **Judas Young** ... Intercontinental champion **Vic Divine** beat **Kevin Landry** (substituting for **Johnny Heartbreaker**) ... **Little Guido Maritato** pinned **Tiger Khan** ... **Primo Carnera** defeated **Street Style** ... **The Backseat Boyz** defeated **Ric Blade** & **Nick Berk** to win the vacant tag team title ... **Nova** pinned **Tony DeVito**.
(05-11-01)

—John Reynolds

NORTH CAROLINA

PFAFFTOWN—AIWF at the Community Center: **The Mental One** defeated **The Mighty Yankee** ... **Steve Niles** beat **Rowland Papers** and **Mitch Blake** in a three-way match ... **Jamie Jannetty** & **Azerial** defeated **Sexy Kevena** & **Freaky Freddie** ... **The War Machines** & **Easy Rider** wrestled **The Savior**, **Matrix**, & **Jackie Anderson** to a no-contest ... **Badd Brad** & **Brian Danzig** beat AIWF tag team champions **Capital Punishment** to regain the belts ... RCWF heavyweight champion **The Scorpion** defeated **Don Carson** and **Major Havoc** by disqualification in a three-way match when **The War Machines** interfered ... **Creeping Death** & **Brian Danzig** beat **Ashe** & **Bane** in a ladder match.
(05-19-01)

—Dean Puckett

MOUNT AIRY—NCWF at the National Guard Armory: **Corey Edsol Granite** defeated **The American Ninja** & **The Amazing Sideshow** ... **Chris Cario** wrestled NCWF heavyweight champ **Jason Benoit** to a double-countout ... AIWF heavyweight champ **Creeping Death** defeated **The American Shadow** and **King Anubus** in a three-way dance ... **Capital Punishment** beat AIWF tag team champs **Brian Danzig** & **Badd Brad** to win the belts ... **Capital Punishment**, **Dynamite Doug**, **L.A. Wild One**, **Diamond Dave**, & **Don Carson**

Reckless Youth is a master of many impressive aerial moves, but he knows when it's time to wear an opponent down with basic holds like the abdominal stretch. He beat Qeenan Creed in this match and became the new IPW light heavyweight champ.

defeated **Robbie Evil**, **T-Money**, **Bad Boy**, **Sledge**, **Brian Danzig**, & **Bad Brad** in a "War Games"-style match.
(05-12-01)

—Dean Puckett

OHIO

COLUMBUS—International Wrestling Alliance at Body Fit Gym: **Natasha** beat **Shawn Knoxx** in a mixed gender match ... **Roadblock** wrestled **"Dangerous" Damien Kass** to a double-disqualification ... **Brad Schultz** beat **Big Money D** for the U.S. title ... Cruiserweight champion **Al B. Dammed** beat **Brian Fury** ... **Tommy Chill** beat **The Holyman** to win the hardcore title ... **Mark Mattis** defeated **Carlton Cornelius Kazz III** ... Tag team champions **The Crosstown Players** beat **The Poe Boys** and **The Repeat Offenders** in a three-way dance.
(05-19-01)

—Mike Ripple

MURRAY CITY—NWA West Virginia/Ohio at the Teen Center: **Viper** pinned **Tommy Boy Mulligan** ... **Tyler James** pinned **Dr. Doom** ... **Awesome Arpin** beat **Johnny Hard** by disqualification ... **J.W. Idol** wrestled **Titan** to a no-contest ... **Magnum** beat **Doink the Clown** ... **Awesome Arpin** & **J.W. Idol** beat **Cole Cash** & **Johnny Hard**.
(05-04-01)

—Corey Hickman

PENNSYLVANIA

GLENOLDEN—Liberty All-Star Wrestling at the Goodwill Fire Company: **Ric Blade** beat **Nicky Benz** ... **Rockin' Rebel** beat **"Doomsday" Danny Rose** ... **Patch** defeated **Hellhound Cujo** ... **Super Cody** defeated **O-Dogg** and **James Proper** in a three-way match ... Light heavyweight champion **Maverick** defeated **White Lotu** ... **Bart Scholl** defeated **Bishop Iggy Rose** ... **C.W. Anderson** defeated **Rapid Fire Maldonado** ... Heavyweight champion **Jimmy Jannetty** beat **Mark Smart**.
(05-26-01)

—Craig Wharton

INDIANA—APWF 2000 at the Omni: **Zubov** pinned **Dr. Feelgood** ... **Big Zeek Yoder** defeated **Abe Yoder** ... **Devil Budikahn** beat **El Tiburon** in a hair vs. mask match ... **Sheik Abdul Hussien** pinned **Brian O** ... **Mike Quackenbush** defeated **Matt Vandal** in a ladder match ... **Little Guido Maritato** pinned **Julio Dinero** ... **Steve Corino** defeated **The Protege** ... **Bad Bubba Brewer** pinned **T. Rantula** in a weapons match.
(05-25-01)

—Dean Puckett

READING—IWA at the Riverside Arena: **Josh Daniels** pinned **Damian Adams** ... **Maverick** beat **Tony Balboa** ... Triple threat champion **Ox Hogg** beat **Tommy Golden** and **Psycho** ... **Bax** beat **Fumar** ... **Bart Hollar** beat **Kid America**, **Beater**, & **BPA Barry** in a handicap match ... **The Hooch Hollar Boys** beat **Dave Valentine** & **Vince Bono** in a streetfight ... **Kevin Knight** & **Hadrian** defeated **Rapid Fire Maldonado** & **Roman** ... Heavyweight champion **Dylan Night** beat **Biggie Biggs**.
(05-25-01)

—Dorothy Podsvirow

OAKLAND—Far North Wrestling at Club Lago: **Brian Anthony** defeated **Bill Belvis** ... **Blade** & **Phoenix** defeated **D-Ranged** & **I.M. Crazy** ... **Matt Borne** wrestled to a double-disqualification with **T. Rantula** ... **Seth James** & **Veronica Von Irons** defeated **The Allknighters** ... **"Mr. Insanity" Toby Cline** defeated **Sebastian Dark** ... **Brian O** defeated **Mahoney**.
(05-24-01)

—Kevin Layer

ALLENTOWN—World Wide Wrestling Alliance at Owls Nightclub: **The Heartbreaker** beat **Armageddon** ... **Fury** defeated **Frank Cody** ... **Glen Osbourne** beat **Thorn** ... **The Wolfman** defeated **Lost Soul Wolf** ... **Jack Hammer** defeated **Shane Golden** ... **Dimitrius Arion** defeated **Yar the Lost Soul** to win the heavyweight title.
(05-19-01)

—Mark Stieglitz

RHODE ISLAND

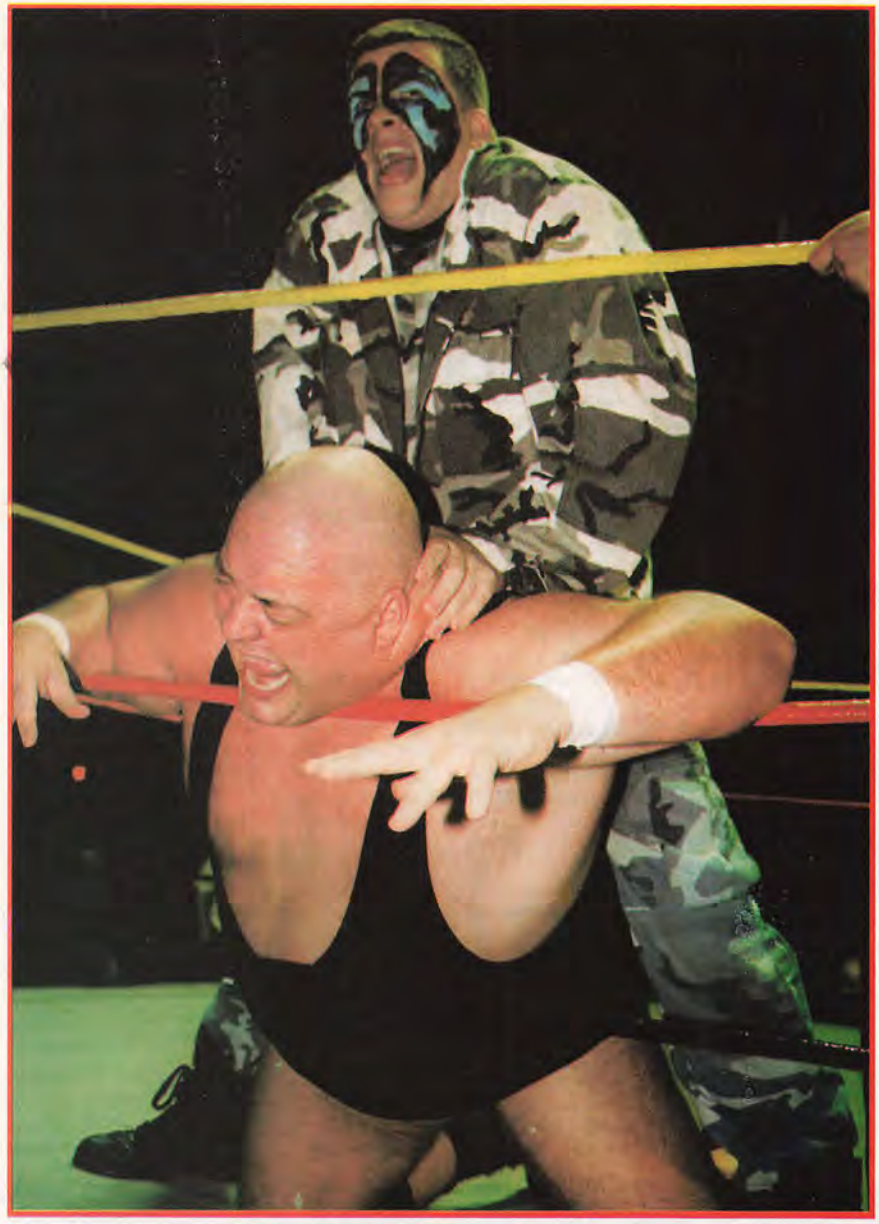
PAWTUCKET—Power League Wrestling at St. Raphael Academy: **Universal Soldier II** won a 20-man battle royal ... **Chris Venom** beat lightweight champion **Kid Krazy** by disqualification ... Tag team champions **Elements of Suicide** beat **Frankie Armadillo** & **Terry Thomas** ... **The Damned** beat **The Original Shooters** ... **Chris Blackheart** beat New England champion **Johnny Angel** to win the title ... **Robbie Ellis** beat **Triplelicious** ... **Shane Simons** & **Derek Molhan** beat **Don Vega** & **Sub-Zero** ... **Don Juan DeSanto** beat heavyweight champion **Dr. Heresy** by disqualification.
(05-19-01)

—Carlos Arenas

SOUTH CAROLINA

GREENVILLE—WWF at the Bi-Lo Center: **Yoshihiro Tajiri** pinned **Spike Dudley** ... Hardcore champion **Rhyno** pinned **Raven** ... **Molly Holly** defeated **Jacquelyn** ... European champion **Matt**

Crowbar is one of the toughest and most underrated wrestlers in the business, yet no one could fault him for losing this handicap match to Tony Mamaluke and Little Guido. Both opponents worked over one of his arms.



A good way to wear out King Kong Bundy is try to limit his oxygen supply. This tactic worked for a while for Corporal Punishment, though Bundy, the IPW heavyweight titleholder, had his hand raised at the end.

Hardy beat **Albert** ... **The Undertaker** pinned **The Big Show** ... **Steve Blackman** & **Test** beat **Bull Buchanan** & **The Goodfather** ... Light heavyweight champion **Jeff Hardy** pinned **Jerry Lynn** ... **Crash** & **Hardcore Holly** defeated **The Dudley Boyz** ... Intercontinental champion **Kane** beat **Kurt Angle** ... World tag team champions **Chris Benoit** & **Chris Jericho** beat **Christian** & **Edge** and **Justin Credible** & **X-Pac** in a three-way elimination match.
(06-09-01)

—Michael Carpenter

TENNESSEE

KINGSPORT—Southern States Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **Ray Idol** won a battle royal ... **Ray Idol** defeated **Allen King** to capture the TV title ... Appalachian champion **Porkchop Thomas** defeated **Bryan Wayne** ... **Don Wright** & **Wayne Rogers** wrestled to a double-disqualification with **Hoot Gibson** & **Indian Harry** ... **Death & Destruction** beat **Something Else** ... Heavyweight champion **Brian Overbay** & **Iron Cross** defeated **Death Row 2000** ... Nationwide champ **Bull Pain** beat **Todd Morton** ... **Ricky Harrison** defeated **Tracey Smothers** in a no-disqualification match ... **Tim Horner** & **Cody Michaels** defeated **Buddy Landell** & **Terry Taylor** ... **Brad** & **Bart Batten** defeated **Beau James** & **K.C. Thunder** in a steel cage match.
(05-12-01)

—Matt Brock

JOHNSON CITY—Southern States Wrestling at the Central Elementary School: **The 1-2-3 Express** defeated **The Shadow** & **Drake Tungsten** ... **Roger Anderson** defeated **Cody Michaels** ... **John Noble** & **Ed Browning** defeated **Bryan Wayen** & **Mike Cooper** ... **Ricky Harrison** defeated **Allen King** ... Heavyweight champion **Brian Overbay** beat **Brad Batten** by disqualification when **Scotty Ace** interfered ... **"Handsome" Beau James** defeated **Bart Batten**.
(05-11-01)

—Matt Brock

TEXAS

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS—NWA Southwest at the Texas Indoor Arena: ***Quarterfinal matches in a tournament to crown the first-ever NWA Southwest TV champion:*** **Brett Bonz** pinned **Chris Lynn** ... **Paul London** pinned **Johnny Roofy** ... **Beast** pinned **Kevin Dark** ... **Hellraiser Hark** pinned **Mini Stuff** ... ***Semifinal matches:*** Bonz pinned London ... Hark pinned Beast ... ***Non-tournament match:*** Texas heavyweight champion **Hotstuff Hernandez** defeated **Mike Anthony** by disqualification.
(05-18-01)

—Rob Moore

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS—NWA Southwest at the Texas Indoor Arena: **Mike Thunder** beat **Rocky Reynolds** to become the new NWA junior heavyweight champion ... **Brett Bonz** pinned **Samir** ... **"Mac Daddy" Mike Anthony** pinned **John Saxon** ... **The Hott Boys** (**Eddie Atlas** & **Oz Diggs**) defeated **The Hawaiians** by disqualification ... **Rudy Boy Gonzalez** pinned Texas champion **Hotstuff Hernandez** in a non-title match ... **Kevin Northcutt** pinned **The Beast**.
(05-04-01)

—Rob Moore

UTAH

SALT LAKE CITY—WWF at the E Center: **Spike Dudley** defeated **Crash Holly** ... Light heavyweight champion **Jerry Lynn** beat **Eddie Guerrero** ... **Jeff Hardy** pinned **Billy Gunn** ... **Justin Credible** & **X-Pac** beat **Bradshaw** & **Faarooq**, **Dean Malenko** & **Perry Saturn**, and **The Dudley Boyz** in a four-way elimination match ... **The Undertaker** pinned **Kurt Angle** ... Hardcore champion **The Big Show** pinned **Test** ... European champion **Matt Hardy** beat **Edge** ... **Kane** pinned **Rhyno** ... World tag team champions **Chris Benoit** & **Chris Jericho** beat **Steve Austin** & **William Regal**.
(05-26-01)

—Evan Whitaker

VIRGINIA

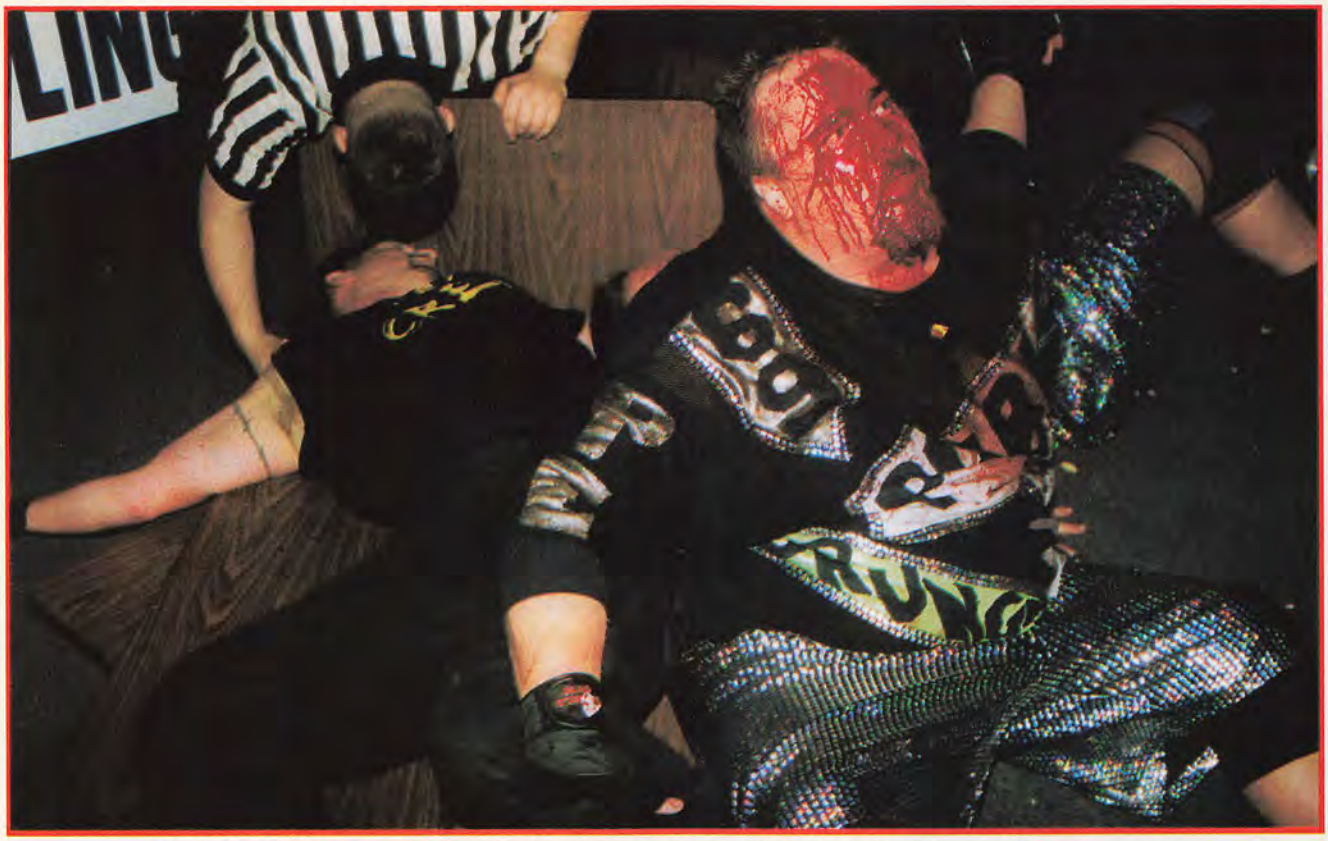
HAMPTON—WWF at the Coliseum: **Spike Dudley** pinned **Steven Richards** ... **Molly Holly** beat **Jacquelyn** ... **Edge** defeated **Steve Blackman** ... **Crash** & **Hardcore Holly** beat **The Dudley Boyz** and **Perry Saturn** & **Dean Malenko** in a three-way elimination match ... **Haku** defeated **K-Kwik** ... **Raven** pinned **Christian** ... **The Big Show** defeated **Test** ... World tag team champions **Chris Benoit** & **Chris Jericho** defeated **Steve Austin** & **William Regal**.
(06-10-01)

—Lee Morgan

ROANOKE—WWF at the Civic Center: **Kaientai** beat **Charlie** & **Russ Haas** ... **Lita** pinned **Ivory** ... European champion **Matt Hardy** defeated **X-Pac** ... **Bradshaw** & **Faarooq** defeated **Bull Buchanan** & **The Goodfather** ... **The Undertaker** pinned **Kurt Angle** ... **Yoshihiro Tajiri** beat **Essa Rios** ... Hardcore champion **Rhyno** pinned **Justin Credible** ... Light heavyweight champion **Jeff Hardy** beat **Jerry Lynn** ... Intercontinental champion **Kane** pinned **Albert**.
(06-10-01)

—Dominick Valenti

SALEM—North American Wrestling Alliance's "Night Of Legends" at the Civic Center: **Tone-Up** won a six-way elimination match ... **Doink** beat



Public Enemy is still wrestling in bloody matches and still putting opponents through tables. They were a little too tough for The Bad Crew in this double-tables bout.

R.C. Luv'n ... **Death & Destruction** beat **Dan Cooley** & **Brian Logan** ... **Rick Morton** defeated **Bruiser Graham** ... **Jimmy Valiant** beat **The Intimidator** (with **Ivan Koloff**) in a Russian chain match ... **The Southern Wrecking Crew** defeated **Jesse** & **John Stone** & **Col. Spud Wade** ... **Masked Superstar** beat **The Spoiler** ... **Rolling Thunder** defeated **Big Slam** to win the vacant heavyweight title.
(06-02-01)

—C. Shane Cochran

SHAWSVILLE—North American Wrestling Alliance at the Middle School: **"Bruiser" Troy Loveday** beat **The Spoiler** by submission ... **Mike Williams** defeated **Mr. Breeze** and **Bob Ozark** in a three-way dance ... **Dan Cooley** pinned **Huge B. Johnson** ... **Justin Wright** defeated **"Mean" Donnie Green** ... **Rolling Thunder** wrestled to a double-countout with **Frank "The Tank" Parker** ... **Jimmy Valiant** pinned **The Assassin** ... **Mike Williams** won a blindfold battle royal
(05-19-01)

—C. Shane Cochran

CHESAPEAKE—Virginia Championship Wrestling at Blakely's: **Ray Storm** pinned **Gotti** ... **Hot Property** & **Korie James** defeated **The Gentlemen's Club** ... **Idol X** pinned **J.T. Rain** in a hardcore match ... **Persephone** pinned **Lilly** ... **2 Damn Badd** pinned cruiserweight champion **Steve Perez** in a non-title match ... **Robert Royal** and **Dr. Studd** wrestled to a no-contest ... **Q-Sic** pinned **Beef** ... Heavyweight champion **Preston Quinn** pinned **The Barbarian**.
(05-13-01)

—Justin Russell

WASHINGTON

VANCOUVER—NWA/ECCW at the Marshall Center: **Average Joe** beat **Skag Rollins** ... **Buffy** beat **Bam Bam Bambi** ... Pacific Northwest heavyweight champion **Scotty Mac** beat **"Tornado" Tony Kozina** ... Hardcore champion **Juggernaut** beat **Brian Bedlam** ... **Bulldog Bob Brown Jr.** beat **Little Nasty Boy** ... **Nova** beat **Christopher Daniels** in a best-of-three-falls match.
(05-26-01)

—Dave Republic

WISCONSIN

EAU CLAIRE—AAW at the Civic Center: **Mike Geuke** & **Natural Man** beat **Killer Claw** & **Dave Rose** ... **Prime Time** beat **Jason Dukes** ... **Kamikaze** beat **J-Rock** ... **Mad Wolverine** beat **Venom** in a no-disqualification match ... **Hannibal** beat **Scotty** & **Prep Boy Timothy** in a handicap match ... **Tony DeNucci** beat **Magnus Maximus** ... **Horace the Psycopath** & **Switch** defeated **Angel** & **Michael Armoni**.
(05-18-01)

—Nicholas Loken

INTERNATIONAL

AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY—Australasian Wrestling Federation at the Blacktown RSL Club: **Scarecrow** defeated **P.C. Virus** by submission ... **Mandatory Sentence** pinned **Thug Thomas** ... **Lobo** pinned **Chucky** ... **II Cognito** defeated **Dementor** ... **Hardcore Superstar** defeated **Taylor Baines** and **J.T. Robinson** in a three-way dance when he pinned Baines ... **Vulkan** beat **TNT**.
(05-26-01)

—Mike Walters

CANADA

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA—WWF at the Winnipeg Arena: **Spike Dudley** pinned **Crash Holly** ... Light heavyweight champion **Jerry Lynn** pinned **Sho Funaki** ... **Dean Malenko** defeated **Perry Saturn** ... **Molly Holly** pinned **Ivory** ... **Chris Benoit** beat hardcore champion **Rhyno** by submission in a non-title match ... Intercontinental champion **Kane** pinned **William Regal** ... **Raven** pinned **Hardcore Holly** ... **The Big Show** pinned **Test** ... **The Dudley Boyz** defeated **Justin Credible** & **X-Pac** and **The Hardy Boyz** in a three-way elimination match ... World champion **Steve Austin** pinned **Chris Jericho** after **William Regal** interfered.
(06-03-01)

—Lance Runyon

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA—WWF at the PNE Coliseum: **Spike Dudley** pinned **Crash Holly** ... Light heavyweight champion **Jerry Lynn** pinned **Eddie Guerrero** ... **Jeff Hardy** pinned **Billy Gunn** ... **Justin Credible** & **X-Pac** beat **Bradshaw** & **Faarooq**, **Dean Malenko** & **Perry Saturn**, and **The Dudley Boyz** in a four-way elimination match ... **The Undertaker** pinned **Kurt Angle** ... Hardcore champion **The Big Show** pinned **Test** ... European champion **Matt Hardy** defeated **Edge** ... **Kane** defeated **Rhyno** ... World tag team champions **Chris Benoit** & **Chris Jericho** defeated **Steve Austin** & **William Regal**.
(05-27-01)

—Edward Jones

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

CLASSIC

From the May 1996 issue

A Mammoth Quest:

THE GIANT'S FIRST BIG STRIDE TOWARD IMMORTALITY!

Giants come and giants fail all the time in wrestling. WCW's Giant doesn't want to become the next behemoth to disappear. That's why he recently made a trip to the Orient

AT 7'4", THE GIANT towers over everyone else in WCW. Also towers over fans, reporters, and promoters, but he still hears what some people are saying about him. Critics and detractors abound. They say he is all power and little talent. Undeserving of title shots. Will be forgotten in a year or two.

His very first WCW match, against Hulk Hogan for the World title at Halloween Havoc '95, ended in chaos. He got to wear the WCW World belt that night, but only after he stole it with the aid of Jimmy Hart.

There have been many giants who have come and gone in wrestling. Too many. Giant Gonzales was the last one. Many expected a lot of him, but he was a bust. He had limited talent and bad knees. No bizarre costume could hide that.

On the opposite end of the giant spectrum, there was Andre,

the greatest giant of all-time. Save for the last few forgettable years of his career, Andre intimidated with his size and impressed with his skills. For a man who was 7'4", he showed versatility and tenaciousness coupled with incredible strength and resiliency. He knew how to wrestle.

The Giant didn't happen upon his name by accident. And he doesn't want the emphasis on the "Giant" part. He wants the emphasis to be on "The." He wants to be *The* Giant. The one wrestler you think about when big men are discussed. And he has a plan.

"I wanted to earn my stripes and make myself great," said The Giant. "Everyone told me that one place I could do that was in Japan."

So when WCW officials announced they were planning a brief tour of "The Land Of The Rising Sun," Giant said, "Count me in!" As many skeptics as he has faced in the U.S., he knew he'd face more there. Scowls and choke-slams would not impress the discriminating fans in Japan. He needed more.

The promoters teamed him

Sure, The Giant could probably beat someone like Tadao Yasuda simply by overpowering him (left), but by adding moves like the dropkick to his repertoire (above), he becomes that much more dangerous. And maybe one day, he will become a legend.

with Arn Anderson against Shinya Hashimoto and Tadao Yasuda. The gave The Giant the perfect opportunity to learn from one of the best technical wrestlers in the world.

"The Giant came to me after the pairing was announced,"

PWI RATINGS May 1996

The Undertaker

TOP 10
1. Bret Hart
2. Randy Savage
3. The Undertaker
4. Goldust
5. Hulk Hogan
6. Shawn Michaels
7. Ric Flair
8. Diesel
9. Lex Luger
10. Sting

TAG TEAMS
1. The Smokin' Gunns
2. Lex Luger & Sting
3. Harlem Heat
4. Skip & Zip
5. Public Enemy
6. Marcus Bagwell & Scotty Riggs
7. PG-13
8. The Rock 'n' Roll Express
9. The Gangstas
10. Doug Gilbert & Tommy Rich

WCW
World champion: Randy Savage
1. One Man Gang
2. Ric Flair
3. Hulk Hogan
4. Sting
5. Lex Luger
6. Johnny B. Badd
7. The Giant
8. Brian Pillman
9. Arn Anderson
10. Dallas Page

WWF
World champion: Bret Hart
1. Goldust
2. The Undertaker
3. Diesel
4. Razor Ramon
5. Shawn Michaels
6. Jeff Jarrett
7. Ahmed Johnson
8. Davey Boy Smith
9. Hunter Hearst Helmsley
10. The 1-2-3 Kid

ECW
Heavyweight champion: The Sandman
1. 2 Cold Scorpio
2. Tommy Dreamer
3. Raven
4. Sabu
5. Taz
6. Mikey Whipwreck
7. Rey Misterio Jr.
8. Stevie Richards
9. 911
10. Hack Myers

MOST POPULAR
1. Shawn Michaels
2. Sting
3. Razor Ramon
4. Bret Hart
5. Randy Savage
6. Hulk Hogan
7. Ahmed Johnson
8. The Undertaker
9. Johnny B. Badd
10. Diesel

MOST HATED
1. Goldust
2. Big Van Vader
3. The Giant
4. Jeff Jarrett
5. Brian Pillman
6. The 1-2-3 Kid
7. Ric Flair
8. Jerry Lawler
9. Davey Boy Smith
10. Taz

Bodyslamming someone like Yasuda doesn't take much effort from The Giant, but more complicated moves do. It's important that he push himself to learn to execute such moves properly.

reflected Arn. "I'd seen him wrestle Hogan. He was tough, but he was green as a four-leaf clover. But I saw potential."

So the veteran Horseman worked with the big man, teaching him to complement his power attack with a solid ground strategy. Throw in a few dropkicks and takedowns, he told him.

"You get that big man in the air," said Anderson. "The shock value, not to mention the force of the blow, will knock any man down. Guaranteed!"

The Giant would later show what he learned in front of a *WCW Monday Nitro* audience on December 18, when he wrestled then-World champion Randy Savage. After unleashing a predictable but effective power attack on the champ, The Giant surprised Savage by throwing an

A vertical suplex is a potentially devastating maneuver if The Giant uses it to maximum advantage.

effective dropkick and executing a drop toehold almost perfectly. Stunned silence fell over the arena. Backstage, mouths of many a wrestler dropped.

"It felt great," recalled The Giant. "That shut the critics up!"

His real test had come on November 13 in the Orient. As he entered Tokyo's Sumo Hall with Anderson, the crowd was definitely impressed by his size. But size alone wouldn't beat two of New Japan's best. Hashimoto and Yasuda knew that they had a monumental task in front of them. Unfortunately, they didn't realize *how* monumental.

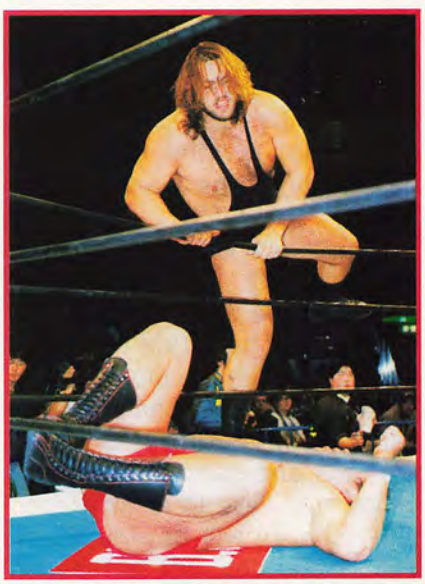
After a few power moves, The Giant looked at Anderson and got the high sign. Out of nowhere, he began to incorporate some of the moves Anderson had talked to him about, including that dropkick. The Japanese never knew what hit them ... literally. They had to scramble to come back and win the bout.

"That one match was a year's worth of experience for the big man," Anderson said. "Hogan better watch out. We Horsemen don't get along with everyone in the Dungeon of Doom, but I do like what I see in The Giant."

"I think I was more nervous for that match than my first with Hogan," admitted The Giant. "I had to show everyone that I could improve from that first title match."

Just about every man seven feet and taller who has made his pro wrestling debut in the last 15 years has been compared to Andre. This Giant likes being compared.

"I have chosen to live up to a legacy of big men," said The Giant. "Andre was the greatest big man ever. I'm not trying to fill those boots. I want to make new



Just seeing someone as big and powerful as The Giant enter the ring has to be somewhat intimidating for even an experienced competitor. But The Giant shouldn't try to win on intimidation alone.

The choke-slam will probably always be a staple of the big man's repertoire. The more he learns, however, the more versatile (and difficult to beat) he will be.

footsteps and blaze my own trail. I want to be *The* Giant!"

Though his choice of friends and managers is questionable, The Giant does seem to be taking steps in the right direction. He wants more than bulk. He wants to expand his repertoire beyond a simple choke-slam. He may have entered wrestling with the singular goal of destroying Hulk Hogan, and he may yet do that, but it's no longer his only goal. He has decided to stick around for a while. And while he's around, he wants to get better.

The Giant has tasted gold in WCW already. Though he hasn't won it yet, he did get to wear the WCW World belt. That taste may have given him the motivation to become a great technical wrestler and win that belt legitimately. Fans and soon-to-be-former critics may have to acknowledge that soon he will be *The* Giant. That World belt, not to mention immortality, may be within his grasp.

And it may only be a few drop toeholds and dropkicks away. □

PWI, May 1996

The cover: Goldust was featured on the cover for the first time, but the cover story was hardly flattering, It was a hard-hitting piece that assailed the WWF and Vince McMahon for creating Goldust, a controversial character portrayed by Dustin Rhodes. Goldust went so far as to insinuate that he wanted to pursue a romantic relationship with Razor Ramon. Keep in mind that at this time, some people still considered the WWF to be good, clean family entertainment.

The centerfold: We also had first-time centerfold subjects in the form of Public Enemy. Rocco Rock and Johnny Grunge had just come off an amazingly successful run in ECW and were feuding with The Nasty Boys in WCW. Unfortunately for them, despite several chances, they never made it big in the Big Two, and within a few years, they disappeared from the national scene.

Anyone ... Anyone? Jeff Jarrett was looking to re-establish himself as one of the WWF's top stars after returning to the federation. Since he had a falling-out with his old sidekick The Roadie (Road Dogg), rumor had it that he wanted to put together his own supergroup in order to gain some power and protection. Such a group was never formed, although Jarrett was part of both The Four Horsemen and NWO later in his *WCW* career.

Fine, We're *All* Sorry! Ric Flair was even more cocky than usual after Starrcade 1995. Not only did he score a big upset by beating both Sting and Lex Luger in a triangle match, but as a result of his win, he immediately went on to face WCW World champ Randy Savage—and shocked him, too. Most people felt Flair's world championship days were behind him at this point, so he demanded an apology from the world afterward. By the way, he won four *more* WCW World titles after this one!

It's All Your Fault ... Angry that their feud wasn't voted the best of 1995 by *PWI* readers, arch-enemies Tommy Dreamer and Raven vowed to step up the violence level in ECW in 1996 to force fans to vote for them. Their war continued well into 1996, but it didn't finish in the top four in that year, either.

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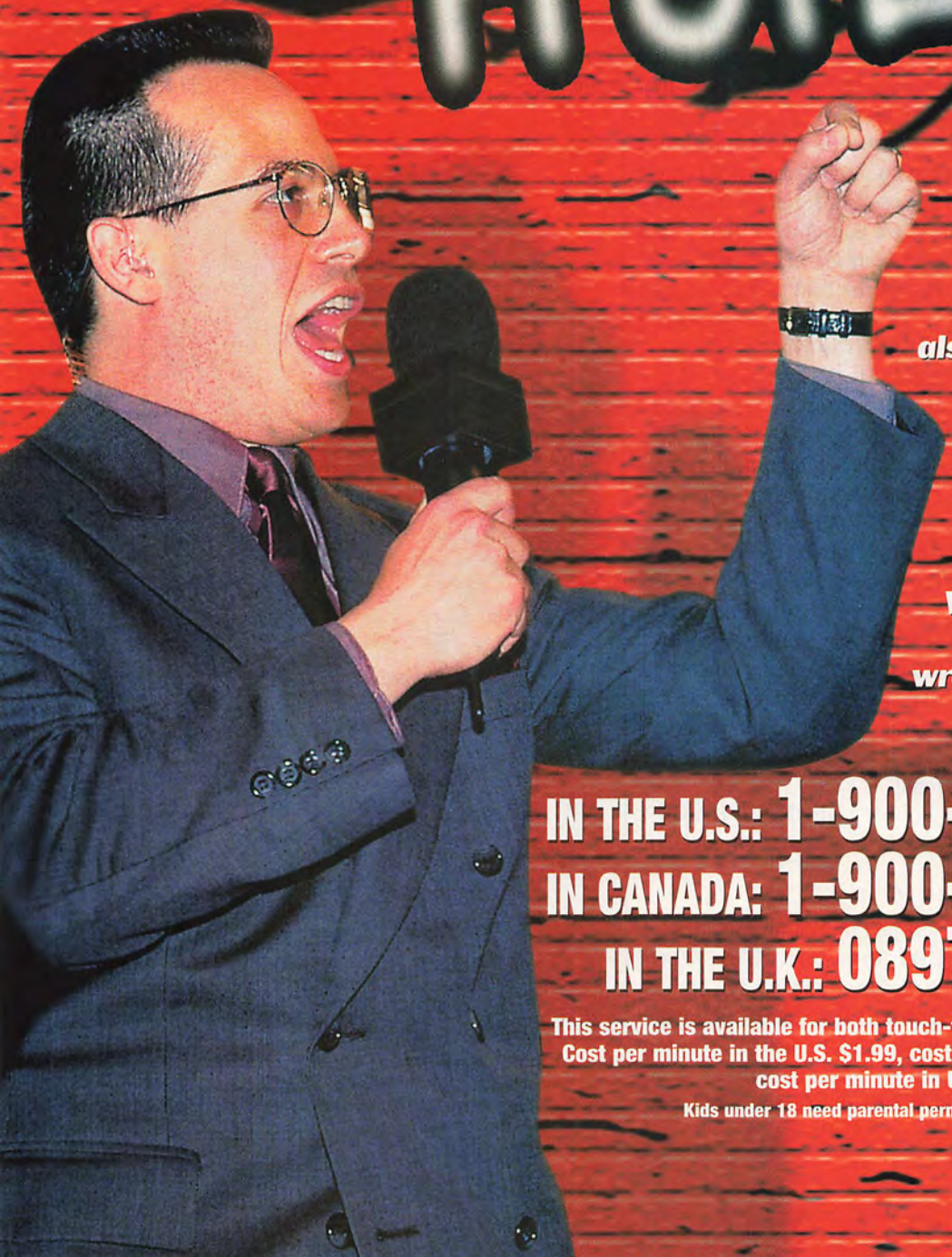

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SUPERCARDS SPECTACULAR

A photo of a bloody Steve Austin adorned the cover of the August 2001 issue of *PWI*, our annual in-depth examination of wrestling's spring supercards. We devoted more pages than ever to supercards this year, and our readers had a lot to write and say about both the issue and the shows.

"Even though there was only one really big supercard for you to cover, it didn't matter, because WrestleMania X-Seven was the best pay-per-view I ever saw," wrote Jim Bodger of Vinton, Virginia. "The more coverage you could give that the better."

"I love how you include coverage of the Super 8 every year," e-mailed Paul Francis of Newark, Delaware. "If there's a more exciting indy card, I'd sure like to see it."

"Another great supercards issue," wrote Wendy Lavin of Chicago. "I especially liked the stuff on WCW's *Night Of Champions*, but it's too bad the last WCW show before Shane bought it wasn't a spectacular pay-per-view. The wrestling itself that night was forgettable."

MORE LILIAN!

I just want to say that I really enjoy the new format of *PWI*, especially the increase in color photos. That made all the difference in your article about women's wrestling ("Women's Work," July 2001). I learned a lot by reading that. And thanks for mentioning Princess Little Cloud. She was a big favorite around here in the late-1960s.

You also had some great photos of Francine's past ("Press Conference"). So why did we end up with that photo of Lilian Garcia on page 70? Is that the best you could find to print? She has a weird expression on her face—I can't tell whether she's laughing or scared about something! Also, if we men "can't get enough of her short skirts and dresses" on *Raw*, why didn't you give us a photo that showed Lilian from head to toe? She's a beautiful lady who hardly gets any camera time on *Raw*, unless you tape the show and use the freeze frame button during replay! Lilian deserves much better, and so do her fans!

DENNIS J. HAMER
Omaha, NE

HOT STUFF!

I just picked up my copy of *PWI Presents: Women Of Wrestling*, and I have to say that it is absolutely fantastic. There are beautiful women featured prominently in there that I totally forgot about, and I'm glad that your magazine reminded me of them. The cover photo of Stacy Keibler was sensational, but I think my favorite shots were the ones of my all-time favorite woman of wrestling, the appropriately named Woman. She's so hot. I wish the WWF would sign her. Keep up the great work, guys!

RICH FREEMAN
Racine, WI

Fans of the sultry Woman (reader Rich Freeman is certainly one!) will want to check out *PWI's Women Of Wrestling* special. You'll see great photos of her and 99 other hotties in it!

NO ROCK FOR HIM!

I just finished reading the 2001 "*PWI* Poll" (June 2001). It was good overall, but what I can't understand is how in the question, "If you could watch the matches of only one wrestler, whom would you choose?" six percent of the insiders voted for The Rock! How could anyone think that?

Now to me, if you've seen one of Rock's matches, you've seen them all. Since reading that, I took the time to study Rock's matches more closely. In a typical match, Rock storms the ring and throws punches almost from bell to bell, with a few belly-to-belly suplexes and Samoan drops thrown in. Then the match goes to the outside, where The Rock smashes his opponent's face into the announcers' table, then The Rock throws several more punches before the predictable finish, the Rock bottom, or sometimes that stupid elbow off the ropes.

It makes me retch when I think of his record-breaking six WWF World titles. I hope Steve Austin runs him out of wrestling for good.

MIKE BUECKERT
Osler, Saskatchewan

NO, *YOU* TELL EVERYONE

I'm not really sure if all the readers of *PWI* are aware of it, but Texas has a hot indy scene. With promotions like NWA Southwest, TCW, TASW, and SPW, Texas fans are being treated to some great action. One particular tag team that has been tearing up the scene is The Overboys, Joey Corman and Samir. They hold three tag titles as I write this, and Corman recently held the NWA Southwest junior heavyweight belt. They successfully defended the SPW tag straps against Lenny Lane and Mikey Whipwreck but weren't as successful against Lane and Shane Helms, who defeated them for the TCW tag title.

There is no shame in losing to two guys as talented as Lane and Helms, but I wouldn't be surprised to see Corman and Samir with those belts again soon. Please let everyone know that Texas wrestling is alive and well and will be making a lot of noise in the near future.

JOHN LARANCE
torpedoblackhart@yahoo.com

Bret Hart (shown against Curt Hennig) did not appear with his father, Stu, at a *Raw* event in Calgary in May. That was a bit disappointing to reader Tamara Merlow.

☎KING HEYMAN?

I never thought I'd say this, but I don't think the WWF misses Jerry Lawler all that much. I was a big fan of Lawler and I was mad when I heard he quit, but I think Jim Ross and Paul Heyman make just as good a team on *Raw* as Ross and "The King" made. They might even be a little better. I don't know, maybe Lawler's act was getting a little stale, but I think Paul E. is a great commentator, and the bickering between him and J.R. is great stuff.

EDDIE WINSTON
Greensboro, NC

NO BRET? TOO BAD

I thought it was classy of the WWF to have Stu Hart at the *Raw* held in Calgary on Memorial Day and to acknowledge his presence on camera. I hope some of the bitterness between the WWF and at least some of the Hart family has faded away. I just wish Bret Hart had been there that night, too. I know he'll probably never forgive Vince McMahon for some of the things Vince has done, but I can at least hope that Bret isn't still tormented by what happened to him at Survivor Series '97. I'm not saying Vince was right to do what he did, but I hope Bret doesn't have all those bad feelings about the McMahons still burning inside him every day. That's not healthy for anyone.

TAMARA MERLOW
Kitchener, Ontario

SHE HAS SOMETHING THERE

Is it just me, or is the whole Spike Dudley-Molly Holly romance playing out a lot like the plot of Shakespeare's *Romeo And Juliet?* Whether it is or not, I have to admit I'm having a lot of fun watching. Seeing Spike get all flustered and trying to defend Molly against guys like Kurt Angle is really cool. I always enjoyed watching Spike in ECW and am glad to see he's getting a chance to be a star in the WWF.

LYNDA DAVIES
Anaheim, CA □

PWI HOTLINE EXTRA!

YOUR ANSWERS TO OUR QUESTION OF THE WEEK!

Question of the Week: Given the recent pushes of Chris Benoit and Chris Jericho, which one do you think is more likely to remain on the elite level in the WWF? (May 29 to June 4, 2001)

Hotline callers respond: "I'd say Chris Benoit, definitely," responded Mike Thatcher of York, Pennsylvania. "I've said for a year that once Benoit really got his shot, he'd take full advantage of it."

"Benoit," said John Fulton of Sinking Springs, Maryland. "He's the better wrestler of the two, and I think wrestling counts for a lot in today's WWF. He gets great matches out of almost everyone, big or small."

"I never understood why Jericho wasn't elevated a lot sooner," said Jay Braun of Seattle. "He has so much charisma and is so over. People will demand that he stay at the main-event level."

BACK ISSUES OF THE Wrestler

Don't miss a single issue of the magazine that has thrilled wrestling fans for two generations, THE WRESTLER! Complete your collection of the most respected wrestling publication in the world! Supplies are limited, so don't delay—order today!

March 1979: Backlund vs. Ladd: Did Bruno's "Interference" Cost Ladd The WWWF Title? Also: Angelo Mosca, Dick Murdoch, Peter Maivia, Bob Orton Jr., Bockwinkel-Rhodes, Brisco-Race, Crusher Blackwell, Lewin-T. Funk.

May 1979: Paul Jones-Rick Steamboat Feud: Who Is Really To Blame? Also: Valiants, Jack Brisco, Larry Hennig, Johnson-King, Lanza-Mulligan, Chief Jay Strongbow, Snuka-Patera.

July 1979: Ernie Ladd's Claim: "Mr. Wrestling II Uses A Loaded Mask!" Also: Backlund-Race, Andre-Baker, Bruno Sammartino, Nick Bockwinkel, Dick Slater, Sonny King, Valiants, Stan Hansen.

Sept. 1979: A New—And Deadly—Feud For Rick Steamboat. Also: Roddy Piper, Superstar Graham, Backlund-Brower, Cyclone Negro, Greg Gagne, The Bruiser-Brody, Dino Bravo, Mil Mascaras, Hussein Arab.

Dec. 1979: Is Andre Ready To Quit Wrestling? Also: Harley Race-El Halcon, Superstar Graham, Steve Keirn, Volkoff-Bruno, Sheik-Mascaras, Igor-Lewin, Dusty Rhodes, Putski-Brower.

April 1980: Did Ken Patera Destroy Dusty Rhodes' Bionic Elbow? Also: Terry Funk, Kevin Von Erich, DiBiase-Backlund, Bockwinkel & Heenan, Baba-Race, Mr. Wrestling II, Youngblood & Steamboat.

Aug. 1980: The Reign Of Bloodshed Begins: Stevens & Valentine Win The NWA Tag Team Title! Also: Kerry Von Erich, Backlund & Skaaland, Nick Bockwinkel, Zbyszko-Bruno, Keirn-Muraco, Samoans, Wrestling II-Idol.

June 1981: Bruno Sammartino: "I Want To Break Stan Hansen's Neck!" Also: Ted DiBiase, Garea & Martel, Mike Graham, Mongolian Stomper, Piper-Superstar, Verne Gagne, Tommy Rich.

Sept. 1980: Why Ernie Ladd Says ... "I'm Tired Of Being Your King." Also: Rick Steamboat, Mad Dog Vachon, Bugsy McGraw, Patera-Patterson, Manny Fernandez, Bob Backlund, Greg Gagne, Mike Sharpe.

Oct. 1980: Kevin Von Erich Wins The Missouri Title From Kevin Von Erich! Also: Mr. Wrestling II, Pedro Morales, Superstar Graham, Dusty Rhodes, Idol-Race, Rick McGraw.

Feb. 1981: Larry Zbyszko's Claim: "Tony Garea Begged Me Not To Hurt Him!" Also: The Grappler, Race-Patera, Hussein Arab, Humperdink-Rhodes, Gilberts, Mr. Wrestling II, Bravo-Bockwinkel.

Oct. 1981: Is The Funk Family At War? Why Terry Funk And Dory Funk Jr. Were Forced To Wrestle. Also: Backlund-Patterson-Mosca, Harley Race, Rhodes-Khan, Kevin Sullivan, Flair-Patera, Verne Gagne.

Jan. 1982: Rich vs. Masked Superstar: Can Tommy Rich Survive As Georgia's Last Hero? Also: Kiwis, Bockwinkel-Atlas, Mascaras-Steamboat, Sullivan-Taylor, Bruno Sammartino.

March 1982: U.S. Champion Slaughter vs. Former NWA Champion Race: How Harley Race's Attempt To Win An "Easy" Title Ended In Disaster. Also: Jimmy Snuka, Flair-Idol, Steve Keirn, Steamboat-Patterson, Fuji-Albano-Saito, Bruno Sammartino Jr., Bruiser-Sullivan.

Aug. 1982: Nick Bockwinkel: "Tommy Rich Is Too Stupid To Be Champion!" Also: Putski-Adonis, Blackjack Mulligan Jr., Roddy Piper, Rick Steamboat, Lawler-Kaufman, Mike Graham.

April 1982: How Jack Brisco Controls Ric Flair's Championship Destiny. Also: Tito Santana, Valentine-Atlas, Bob Roop, Armstrongs, John Studd, Eric Embry.

June 1982: Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat: How The NWA Belt Strangled Wrestling's Greatest Friendship. Also: Piper-Armstrong, Hussein Arab, Bruno Sammartino, Adonis & Ventura, Butch Reed.

July 1982: Harley Race—His Destiny Is In The Hands Of Tommy Rich. Also: Rick Steamboat, Chief Jay Strongbow, Buzz Sawyer, Ric Flair, Roddy Piper.

Sept. 1982: Dusty Rhodes Returns To Florida: The Tragic Comeback That Should Not Have Happened. Also: Manny Fernandez, Armstrong-Piper, Blassie-Mulligan, Japan, Bockwinkel-Hogan.

Dec. 1982: Morales vs. Snuka: Does Pedro Deserve To Be Intercontinental Champion? Also: Bob Orton Jr., Kamala, Rich & Rhodes, Barry Windham, Ted DiBiase, JYD-Bockwinkel, Oliver Humperdink.

Jan. 1983: Ivan Putski Humiliates Cowboy Bob Orton: Can The Grand Wizard Pick Up The Pieces? Also: Barry Windham, Muraco-Sawyer-Rich, Nick Bockwinkel, Flair-Youngblood-Steamboat, Fabulous Kangaroos.

Feb. 1983: Exclusive Coverage: Nick Bockwinkel Regains The AWA Title From Otto Wanz. Also: Backlund-Graham, Rich-Sawyer, Barry Windham, Martel & Garea, McDaniel & Piper, Kamala.

May 1983: What Will Happen When The Samoans Become Too Smart For Capt. Lou Albano? Also: Tommy Rich, Terry Allen, Eddie Gilbert, Kerry-Race, Ladd & Rhodes, Flair-Orndorff.

June 1983: Flair-Windham Match Spurs Controversy: Should The NWA Champion Be Allowed To Choose His Challengers? Also: Ivan Koloff, Bruiser Brody, Kerry Von Erich, Andre-Kamala, Brazil-Valentine, Gagnes-Martel.

July 1983: Ric Flair: "I Wrestle The Men Backlund Is Afraid Of." Also: Putski-Adonis, Kevin Sullivan, Bob Roop, Martel-Heenan.

Sept. 1983: Nick Bockwinkel Forces Hulk Hogan Into Exile: And Only The Fans Can Bring Him Back. Also: Briscos, Blackwell-Kerry-Race, Paul Ellering, Mulligan & Windham.

Nov. 1983: Target—Harley Race! Can Dusty Rhodes Fulfill His American Dream A Third Time? Also: Rick Rude, Rotundo-Kabuki, Gagne & Brunzell, Tito Santana, Von Erichs-Freebirds.

Dec. 1983: The Night The AWA World Title Was Stolen From Mil Mascaras. Also: Roddy Piper, Larry Zbyszko, Dino Bravo, Fabulous Ones, Garvin & Sunshine.

March 1984: Is Tito Santana Trying To Blackmail The WWF? Also: Wayne & Sawyer, Hogan-Race, David Von Erich, Jesse Ventura.

June 1984: David Von Erich—We'll Never Forget You. Also: Billy Jack, Flair-Race, Bockwinkel-Bravo, Brickhouse Brown.

July 1984: Tommy Rich Is Back! And He Owes It All To The Fans. Also: Valiant-Rhodes, Ric Flair, Mike Von Erich, Billy Jack.

Aug. 1984: Garvin vs. Roberts: "Hands Of Stone" Crushes "The Snake." Also: Freebirds-Devastation Inc., Sawyer-Sullivan, Lawler & Dillon, McDaniel-Race.

Sept. 1984: Kerry Von Erich Wins The NWA World Title: For David ... For Texas ... For Wrestling! Also: Road Warriors-Bundy & Superstar, Johnson & Atlas-Piper & Orndorff, Billy Jack-Sawyer.

Nov. 1984: The $50,000 Full-Nelson Challenge Match: Billy Jack Gets Revenge Against Superstar Graham. Also: Piper-Hogan, Heenan & Saito, Brody & Hansen, Von Erichs.

Dec. 1984: The Tully Blanchard-Rick Steamboat Feud: Will Dusty Rhodes End It ... Or Make It Worse? Also: Tito Santana, Martel-Atlas, D. Funk, Mike Von Erich, Williams-Taylor.

Jan. 1985: Kerry Von Erich: "I've Got Ric Flair's NWA Title Within My Grasp." Also: Albano & Lauper, Koloffs & Kernodle, Road Warriors, Lawler & Rude, Scott McGhee.

Feb. 1985: Greg Valentine Wins Tito Santana's Intercontinental Title ... But Does He Deserve To Be Champion? Also: Ronnie Garvin, Warriors-Sheepherders, Flair-Billy Jack, Nikita Koloff.

April 1985: Six-Man Riot! Road Warriors & Ellering vs. Rhodes, Rich, & Anderson. Also: Tonga Kid, tomorrow's stars, Adams-Kevin, Flair-Jack, Terminators.

June 1985: Are The WWF Rulebreakers Singling Out Barry Windham For Destruction? Also: Zbyszko-Backlund, Rhodes-Blanchard, Tommy Rich, Oliver-Haynes.

July 1985: It's A Dog's Life ... And Junkyard Dog Wouldn't Trade It With Anyone! Also: Backlund-Martel, Kernodle-Koloff, Butch Reed, Hernandez & Sunshine, Mike Graham.

Aug. 1985: Ten Days Of Blood And Glory: The Road Warriors Invade Japan! Also: Terry Taylor, Magnum T.A., Bugsy McGraw, Sheik & Volkoff-Windham & Rotundo, 20th anniversary.

Oct. 1985: David Shultz Gets An NWA Title Shot: Ric Flair—"I Wrestle The Men Hulk Hogan Is Afraid Of!" Also: Misty Blue, Rick Martel, Kendall Windham, George Steele, Killer Brooks, wrestling greats' all-time top 10.

June 1986: Kerry Reveals His Secret: "I've Told Magnum T.A. How To Beat Ric Flair!" Also: Steve Williams, Hogan-Orton, Flair-Bockwinkel, Lex Luger.

Nov. 1986: Morton & Gibson Take A Trip To Badstreet U.S.A.: The Rock 'n' Roll Express vs. The Freebirds. Also: Eddie Gilbert, Hogan-Orndorff, Mike Von Erich, Mulligan-Bass.

Dec. 1986: Ric Flair's NWA Title Reign: Last Chance To Silence The Critics! Also: Nikita Koloff, Gilbert & Sting, Hogan-Piper, Abdullah-Adams, Nick Bockwinkel.

Jan. 1987: Bobby Heenan's Bitter Crusade To Destroy Hulk Hogan. Also: Borne & Sawyer, Garvins, Ted DiBiase, Misty Blue Simmes.

Feb. 1987: Tragedy Strikes Wrestling: Magnum T.A. Needs Your Prayers Now More Than Ever. Also: Roberts-Steamboat, Crusher Yurkof, Terry Gordy, Wendell Cooley.

March 1987: Ivan & Khrushchev's Kremlin Orders: Crush Nikita Koloff's Russian Revolution! Also: Barry Windham, One Man Gang, Brian Adias, Savage-Steamboat, Jimmy Snuka.

June 1987: The Hart Foundation vs. The Can-Ams: Special Analysis Of This WWF Superfeud! Also: Nick Bockwinkel, Paul Orndorff, Rhodes & Murdoch, Steve Williams.

July 1987: Missy Hyatt: Will She Kiss And Tell In The WWF? Also: Chris Adams, Hart Foundation, Luger & Horsemen, Nikita-Cornette, Stan Hansen.

Sept. 1987: Independence Day! Also: Hennig-Bockwinkel, Hart Foundation, Koloffs, Bubba Rogers, Missy Hyatt.

Oct. 1987: The Honky Tonk Man Wins The Intercontinental Title: Is Randy Savage The Fans' Last Hope. Also: Kerry Von Erich, Ken Patera, Sting-Gilbert, Horsemen-Freebirds, Zbyszko-Gagne.

Dec. 1987: Hulk Hogan: Will He Be Drowned By The New Wave Of Challengers? Also: Hennig-Lawler, Windham-Steiner, Flair-Williams, Brutus Beefcake, Ronnie Garvin.

Jan. 1988: The Experts Agree: The Road Warriors Will Turn Bad In 1988! Also: Koloff-Taylor, Curt Hennig, Duggan-DiBiase.

Feb. 1988: Ric Flair Admits: "I'm Nothing Without The NWA Belt!" Also: Kerry Von Erich, Jim Cornette, Hogan-Andre, Hennig-Lawler, Terry Taylor.

March 1988: After Four Years As Champion ... Only Hulk Hogan Can Beat Hulk Hogan. Also: Warriors-Demolition, Steve Williams, Luger & Dillon, Calgary, Terry Gordy.

April 1988 (Special Issue): Starrcade, Survivor Series, World Class: Wrestling's Greatest Day! Also: Midnight Rockers, Luger-Horsemen, Santana & Martel, McDaniel-Hennig, Bobby Eaton.

May 1988: Belt Or No Belt ... Hulk Hogan Is Still The People's Champion! Also: Madusa Micelli, Owen Hart-Flair, Tatum & Victory, Scott Hall, Luger-Anderson.

June 1988: How Sting's War With Ric Flair Could Make Him A Horseman! Also: Bobby Heenan, Martel-Zenk, Kerry-Gordy, Ted DiBiase, Nikita Koloff.

Aug. 1988: World Tag Title Power Shift! Also: Windham & Luger, Demolition, Taylor-Freebirds, Paul Ellering, Owen & Bret.

Oct. 1988: The Fantastics Declare: "We Will Not Share Our Fans With The Rock 'n' Roll Express!" Also: Rhodes-Windham, Curt Hennig, Roberts-Rude, Rougeaus, Jim Garvin.

Jan. 1989: The Horsemen Destroyed! The World Title Gained! But The Midnight Express Must Still Prove Themselves! Also: Top Guns, Hart & Rougeaus, Andre-Savage-Hulk, Terry Gordy, Kevin Von Erich.

Feb. 1989: The Road Warriors: "Sting, Dusty, & The Fans Can Go To Hell!" Also: Madusa Miceli, Blue Blazer, Warrior-Hogan, Bigelow-Gordy, Eddie Gilbert.

March 1989: Scared Stiff! "Don't Say Snake!" Also: Jeff Jarrett, Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Bam Bam Bigelow, Hercules, Iron Sheik.

April 1989: Hulkamania Runs Wild Again! Can Randy Savage Stop The Onslaught? Also: British Bulldogs, Road Warriors-Sting & Luger, Lawler-Kerry, Andre, Mike Rotundo.

May 1989: Rick Steamboat—Champion; Rick Steamboat—Challenger: Which Is Better? Also: Sid Vicious, Dusty Rhodes, Savage-Hogan, Samoan Swat Team, Wendi Richter.

June 1989: Ultimate Warrior's Mission Impossible: Destroy Randy Savage For Hulk Hogan. Also: Rick Steamboat, Rick Martel, Larry Zbyszko, Luger-Windham by Sting, Ric Flair.

July 1989: Dino Bravo: The Man Hulk Hogan Cannot Beat! Also: Flair-Steamboat, Rhodes & Perez, Road Warriors & Ellering, Michael Hayes.

Aug. 1989 (Special Issue): Supercard Sunday! Exclusive Coverage Of WrestleMania V And Clash Of Champions VI. Also: Kerry-Embry, Randy Savage, Great Muta, Ted DiBiase, Teddy Long.

Sept. 1989: Our Urgent Plea To Ric Flair: Don't Wrestle Terry Funk. Also: Demolition, Roddy Piper, Hogan-Zeus, Larry Zbyszko, Jerry Lawler.

Oct. 1989: No Holds Barred! Hogan & Beefcake vs. Savage & Zeus: An Exclusive Preview & Analysis. Also: Eric Embry, Four Horsemen, Teddy Long, Hayes-Luger, Art Barr, Billy Jack Haynes.

Nov. 1989: Roddy Piper Pins Randy Savage ... And Hulk Hogan Is Scared Stiff! Also: Mr. T & Von Erichs, Garvin & Hayes, Flair-T. Funk, Dustin-Steel Man, Sgt. Slaughter.

Jan. 1990: The Hulk Hogan Book Of Lists. Also: Brian Pillman, Rich-Luger, Tully & Arn, P.Y. Chu-Hi, Greg Gagne.

March 1990: Funk-Flair: "I Quit!—One War Ends, Two More Begin. Also: Nikita Koloff, Survivor Series, Steiners, Hogan-Zeus, Jim Cornette.

April 1990: Hulk Hogan: A Decade Of Greatness. Also: Luger-Flair, Woman, Piper-Heenan, Billy Travis, Badd Company.

May 1990: Sting & Ultimate Warrior: Running A Parallel Course To Greatness. Also: Von Erichs, Big Bossman, Pillman & Zenk, Hulk Hogan, Mark Callous.

July 1990: My 10 Challenges To Ric Flair, By Lex Luger. Also: Lanny Poffo, Dusty-Savage, Luger-Flair, Doom, Tully Blanchard.

Aug. 1990: Hogan-Warrior II: You Can Make It Happen. Also: Eric Embry, Demolition, Doom, Larry Zbyszko.

Sept. 1990: The Ultimate Warrior Wimps Out! Why He Won't Wrestle Hulk Hogan. Also: Billy Jack Haynes, Lex Luger, Doom-Steiners, Tugboat, Kerry-Borne.

Oct. 1990: Hulk Hogan vs. Earthquake: Exclusive SummerSlam Preview & Analysis. Also: Ultimate Warrior, Ric Flair, Tommy Rich, Tasmanian Devil, Chris Von Erich.

Dec. 1990 (Special Issue): SummerSlam! Exclusive Full-Color Coverage! Also: Stan Hansen, Arn Anderson, Ultimate Warrior, Vic Steamboat, Scott Putski.

Feb. 1991: The Incredible "Halloween Havoc Hoax"! Unraveling The Diabolical Plot. Also: Muta-Steamboat, Hogan-Hart, Ultimate Warrior, Cornette & Express, Norman.

March 1991: Warning To The Ultimate Warrior: Roddy Piper Wants You! Also: Gilbert-Jarrett, Cornette & Express, Teddy Long, Survivor Series, Scott Norton.

April 1991: Hulk Hogan: The Challenges That Remain. Also: Ted DiBiase, Skyscrapers, Lex Luger, Tom Zenk, Fabulous Ones.

May 1991: Only Hulk Hogan Can Rid The WWF Of The Stench Of Sgt. Slaughter. Also: Ric Flair, Bobby Eaton, Sheik-Brazil, Power & Glory, Terry Funk.

June 1991: How Much Longer Can We Depend On Hulk Hogan? Also: Nasty Boys, Sting, Flair-Gigante, Cactus Jack, Kevin Von Erich.

July 1991: Can Ric Flair Shatter The "Myth" Of Japanese Superiority? Also: Embry & Prichard, LOD-Nastys, Steiners, Savage & Elizabeth.

Aug. 1991: If Sgt. Slaughter Said "I'm Sorry" ... Would Hulk And The World Forgive Him? Also: Luger-Nikita, Hennig-Davey Boy, Lanny Poffo, Bam Bam Bigelow.

Nov. 1991: Lex Luger Wins The Title—But Loses His Fans. Also: Rick Steamboat, Roddy Piper, Global, Diamond Studd, Lawler-Embry.

Dec. 1991: Roddy Piper's Exclusive Analysis: Flair vs. Hogan—Who Will Win The Match Of The Century? Also: Sting, 25 greatest teams, Beverly, Cactus Jack.

Jan. 1992: The LOD's Championship Catastrophe: Overpowered By The Natural Disasters. Also: Johnny B. Badd, Mr. Hughes, Jake Roberts, Ronnie Gossett.

Feb. 1992: Shocking WWF Report: McMahon Offers Bounty On Flair—Will Vince Pay The Piper? Also: Ron Simmons, Tito Santana, Bob Backlund, R. Steiner-Abdullah.

March 1992: After Survivor Series & Tuesday In Texas: Has The WWF Title Suffered Irreparable Damage? Also: Brian Pillman, Anderson & Bruiser, Rude-Sting, Mountie-Hart, Jeff Jarrett.

April 1992: After A Year Of Tragedy & Turmoil: The Magic Is Back In WCW! Also: Chris Candido, Paul Orndorff, Lady X, Paul Bearer, Hennig & Flair, Michaels & Jannetty.

Dec. 1992: He's *Baaaaaack!* Jake Roberts Slithers

Into WCW. Also: Paul E. Dangerously, Ron Simmons, Hulk Hogan, Michaels-Martel, Gilberts-Rock 'n' Rolls.

May 1992: He Rumbled Past 29 Men ... Ric Flair's Hour Of Power: Can One Man Stop Him At WrestleMania VIII? Also: Anderson & Eaton, Roddy Piper, Dusty Rhodes, USWA, Don Owen.

June 1992: In Ric Flair's High-Stakes Championship Game, Hulk Hogan & Sid Justice Are Mere Pawns. Also: Eddie Gilbert, Ultimate Warrior, Vinnie Vegas, WCW titles, Koko B. Ware.

July 1992: "Number Two Just Won't Do": For Rick Rude, The U.S. Belt Means Failure: Also: Madusa, Gorilla Monsoon, LOD, Nurse Vanessa, Greg Valentine, Sabu.

Aug. 1992: The Ultimate Warrior: WrestleMania's Accidental Hero. Also: Bunkhouse matches, Undertaker-Roberts, Sting, JYD, Rob Van Dam.

Sept. 1992: Hey, Legion Of Doom—Go For The Title Or Go Away! Also: Repo-Crush, Mondo Kleen, Freebirds-Valentine & Taylor, Dangerous Alliance, Moondogs.

Oct. 1992: British Bulldog & Ultimate Warrior: Why They'll Be Crowned At SummerSlam. Also: Scotty Flamingo, Brian Lee, Martel-Tatanka, Steve Austin, Sting.

Nov. 1992: WWF Beware! It's The Perfect Time For A Curt Hennig Comeback! Also: Crush, Butch Reed, Sting, Buddy Rogers, Dan Spivey.

Jan. 1993: Sting Turns Sadistic: "Hurting Jake Makes Me Happy!" Also: Anderson & Eaton, Bushwhackers-Moondogs, Ramon-Savage, Natural Disasters, Masa Chono.

Feb. 1993: WWF Champion Bret Hart: His Five Most Dangerous Challenges. Also: Sgt. Slaughter, Steve Austin, Rick Steiner, Bob Backlund, Terry Taylor.

April 1993 What's In? What's Out? Also: Razor Ramon, Rick Steamboat, Patriot, Tatanka, Brian Christopher.

May 1993: Sumo Sadism: Will Yokozuna Make His Biggest Splash At WrestleMania? Also: Jim Cornette, Christopher-Jarrett, Benoit-Scorpio, Windham & Rhodes, Hennig-Luger.

Nov. 1993: Bret Hart vs. Lex Luger: It's Not Over Yet! Also: Rude-Dustin, Hulk Hogan, Marty Jannetty, Heavenly Bodies, Tatanka, Sherri Martel.

Jan. 1994: Roasted, Broiled, Fried, Baked ... Any Way You Cook It, Hogan's A Chicken! Also: Rude-Flair, Bagwell & Scorpio, Jim Cornette, Jerry Lawler, Hansen & T. Funk-Abdullah & Sullivan.

May 1994: Aftershocks! How The Royal Rumble Shook Up WrestleMania. Also: Hulk Hogan, Boss, Douglas-Sherri, Patriot, improve WCW.

July 1994: Ric Flair vs. Hulk Hogan: We Preview The Inevitable Battle. Also: Dreamer-Snuka, Jim Crockett's WWN, Ted DiBiase, Shane Douglas, Terra Ryzing.

Aug. 1994: Bret's Nightmare Team Becomes A Reality: Owen Hart & Yokozuna. Also: Cactus-Vader, MOM, Flair-Badd, Nasty Boys, Luna Vachon.

Sept. 1994 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report! Also: Big Van Vader, Parker-Hollywood Blonds, Sting-Rude, WWF legal problems, Prince Kharis, Bunkhouse-Rhodes, Public Enemy.

Nov. 1994: Hulk Hogan's New Commandments: Say Prayers, Take Vitamins ... And Kick Butt! Also: Owen-Bret, Lord Steven Regal, Johnny B. Badd, Jerry Lawler, Mikey Whipwreck.

Jan. 1995: Our Holiday Wish List For 1995. Also: Johnny B. Badd, DiBiase-Tatanka, Bob Backlund, PG-13, Hacksaw Duggan.

March 1995 (Special Issue): 1994—The Year In Pictures. Also: Sullivan-Hogan-Sullivan, WWF '95-WWF '85, Ric Flair, MOM, 911.

April 1995: Imagine Wrestling Today If ... Also: Gunn & Smothers, Harlem Heat, Money Inc., Lawler-Cornette.

July 1995: Hulk Hogan's Contract With America: Also: Marty Jannetty, Brian Pillman, Lawrence Taylor, Bill Dundee.

Oct. 1995: President Backlund?! Also: Steiners, Austin & Pillman, Miss Texas, Gordon Solie.

Nov. 1995: "Take That—And Shut Up!" If Savage Can't Silence Flair, He's Through! Also: Mabel, Jarrett-Ramon, Renegade, WWF legends roundtable.

Dec. 1995 (Special Issue):"20Shawn Michaels: Too Good To Be Second Best! Also: Wrestling rulebook, Vega-Ramon, Mama Cornette, Kamala-Duggan, Big Van Vader.

Winter 1995: Exclusive Preview: Sting vs. Hogan: This Time It's For Real! Also: Steiners, Yankem-Undertaker, Bodies-Cornette, Arn Anderson.

May 1996: WWF In-Vader! Can Bret, Shawn, & Razor Play The Pain Game? Also: Public Enemy, Steve Austin, wrestling oddities, Kensuke Sasaki, Ric Flair.

June 1996 (Special Issue): Fear Of Height! How The Giant Is Paralyzing Wrestling. Also: Shock 'n' Wrestling, Razor Ramon, Brian Pillman, Konnan.

Aug. 1996: Shawn Michaels: Finally—He Has The Title ... Now Here's What He's Gotta Do With It! Also: Public Enemy-Nastys, Bret Hart, Booty Man-Sullivan, Mabel.

Sept. 1996 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report. Also: Savio Vega, Sabu-Scorpio, Chris Benoit, Goldust, Olympians, Giant.

Oct. 1996: Muscling Back To The Top: The Warrior Is Ready To Rule Again. Also: Warriors & Sasaki-Steiners & Norton, Razor & Diesel, Mabel & Mo, Blue Meanie.

Nov. 1996: Brian Pillman: Next WWF Champ! Also: Giant-Sting, Ray Stevens, Dick Murdoch, Cloudy, John Tenta, WCW shuffle.

Dec. 1996 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: Ahmed Johnson, Ric Flair, Mero & Sable, Goldust, Sandman.

Holiday 1996: WCW Shocker: Randy Savage Is Set To Join Hulk Hogan's NWO! Also: Steve Austin, Michaels-Goldust, Arn Anderson, Van Dam-Sabu, Steve Williams.

Jan. 1997: It Could Happen! Hogan's Next Move ... Buy WCW! Also: Undertaker, New Jack, Owen-Bulldog, Ted DiBiase.

Feb. 1997: Wrestling's Top Stars: What 1997 Has In Store For Them! Also: Michaels-Hart, Pit Bull I, Rey Misterio Jr., Kevin Nash.

May 1997: Hogan's Headache: The Pain Is Piper! And The Remedy Is Revenge! Also: Michaels-Hart, Guerreros, J.C. Ice, gang violence, Marc Mero.

July 1997: Infighting, Politics, Egos: Is The NWO Losing Its Edge? Also: WWF-ECW, Dean Malenko, Super 8 tourney, Jerry Lawler.

Sept. 1997 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report: Plus: NWO, Shawn-Bret, football players, Terry & Dory Funk, Luna.

Oct. 1997: Bret Hart & Shawn Michaels: How Low Will They Go? Also: Paul E. Dangerously, DDP & Kimberly, Rhodes family, Keiji Muto.

Nov. 1997: 10-Year Grudge! Lex Luger's Career Ruined By J.J. Dillon? Also: Shawn-Bret, Jeff Jarrett, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn.

Dec. 1997 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: Guerreros, Taz, Syxx, Paul Bearer, Brian Christopher.

Hol. 1997: First Owen ... Then 'Taker ... Then Hogan: Who's Gonna Go Next? Also: Steve Austin, Bret Hart, Lex Luger, Ric Flair, Dean Malenko.

April 1998: "We've Won!" Maybe ... But Can The NWO Handle Its Own Success? Also: Ken Shamrock, Steiners-Warriors, Douglas & Francine, Rocky Maivia.

June 1998 (Special Issue): "Hollywood" Hogan: 10 More Dirt Deeds ... And He's Outta Here! Also: Randy Savage, DeGeneration X, Jim Cornette, Randy Savage, then and now.

July 1998: Death Wish! Costing Hogan The Title Isn't Enough For The Macho Man. Also: Headbangers, Ric Flair, Chris Chetti.

Aug. 1998: We Stand Behind Ya, Vince! It's Time To Fire Austin. Also: Luna-Sable, Randy Savage, Dean Malenko, Super 8 tourney.

Sept. 1998: (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report: Also: Nash-Hogan, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg, Antonio Inoki.

Oct. 1998: The Mother Of All Pay-Per-Views! A WWF-WCW Supercard Is No Longer Just Talk! Also: Sable, Undertaker, Randy Savage, Sabu & Van Dam.

Nov. 1998: Demons Be Damned! Sting Makes The Giant See Red! Also: McMahon-Dude, Jarrett-Blackman, Melanie Pillman, Rey Misterio Jr.

Dec. 1998 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: ECW midyear report, Ric Flair, Kane.

Hol. 1998: "Quit, Mick!" A Desperate Plea From A Distraught Wife. Also: Chris Jericho, Jason Sensation, wrestlers vs. celebrities, hardcore war.

Jan. 1999: Stone-Cold's Personal Survivor Series. Also: Rock-HHH, NWA, Bret Hart, Howard Finkel, three-way title matches.

Feb. 1999: Hot Rocks! The Anger That Drives Shamrock & The Rock. Also: McMahon-Austin, Spike Dudley, Eric Bischoff, Perry Saturn.

March 1999 (Special Issue): 1998—The Year In Pictures. Also: Hall & Nash, Goldust, Mr. Ooh La La, The Undertaker.

April 1999: Hogan's Retirement: White House Or White Lie? Also: DDP-Hart, Taz-Douglas, Steve Austin, Mankind.

May 1999: Team Coverage: The NWO Reunion! Also: Kane-McMahon, Dallas Page, Funk-Abdullah, WWF sideshow.

June 1999 (Special Issue): Ric Flair: The 10 Feats He Must Accomplish Before He's Through. Also: Rocky Maivia, Juventud Guerrera, Billy Gunn, body parts quiz section.

July 1999: Our Bottom Line ... It's High Time Austin Shows McMahon Respect! Also: Jerry Lawler, Rey Misterio Jr., Ken Shamrock, DDP-Bigelow-Goldberg.

Aug. 1999: This Man Is Pure Evil! Trust Hogan And He'll Take You To Hell! Plus: Owen Hart, Vader, Sable.

Sept. 1999 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report. Also: DDP-Sting, Douglas-Credible, Big Show-McMahons, Disco Inferno, Keirn & Lane.

Oct. 1999: Shawn Michaels' Game Of Corporate Chess! Are The McMahons His Pawns? Also: Steiners, Billy Gunn, Savage & George.

Nov. 1999: Austin's New Powers: Shag Vince? Yeah, Baby! Also: Arn-Sid, Hardy Boys, Ernest Miller, Naoya Ogawa.

Dec. 1999 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: ECW midyear report, David & Ric Flair, Test & Stephanie.

Hol. 1999: Before The WWF Can Sell ... Read What They Had To Tell! Also: Kanyon, Big Show, Spike & Mahoney-Axl & New Jack, Kevin Nash.

Jan. 2000: An Insider's Analysis: Why The Guys Can't Handle Chyna. Also: Revolution, ECW expansion, Guerrero & Misterio, WWF/WCW/ECW women.

Feb. 2000: When Will Mankind Finally Tell The Rock ... "Put A Sock In It"? Also: Goldberg, Chris Jericho, Sabu, Harlem Heat.

March 2000 (Special Issue): 1999—The Year In Pictures. Also: Triple-H, Luger-Liz, Sabu-Van Dam, Bob Holly.

Apr. 2000: Can The WWF Survive Without Steve Austin? Also: Dawn Marie-Francine, Meng, Big Show, Madusa.

May 2000: StePHONY: The Most Mistrusted McMahon Of All! Also: Harlem Heat & Midnight, David & Ric Flair, Kurt Angle, Rhino.

June 2000 (Special Issue): The Rock: No. 1 On The Jabroni Hit List! Also: Awesome-Van Dam, Kurt Angle, Vampiro, federation jumpers, book of lists.

July 2000: Tori/Torrie, What's The Story? How They Rank In 10 Crucial Categories. Also: Big Show, Tank Abbott, Too Cool, Rhodes-Dreamer, Jeff Jarrett.

Aug. 2000: We're Con-Vinced! This Attack Saved The WWF! Also: Lex Luger, Radicals, Sandman & Rhino, Cyrus.

Sept. 2000 (Special Issue): WWF Mid-Year Report. Also: Mike Awesome, Nova & Chetti, Paul Wight, Chyna, Dr. Sam Sheppard.

Oct. 2000: Is Chyna Robbing Eddie Of His Latino Heat? Also: Abbott-Steiner, Scotty Too Hotty, Rob Van Dam, David Flair.

Nov. 2000: Special Fear Issue—Rock-Benoit, Ric Flair, HBK. Also: ECW mid-year report, Bill Goldberg.

Dec. 2000 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: Goldberg-Triple-H, Daffney, Christian & Edge, Jeff Peterson.

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Jan. 2001: WWF Brat-titude! Does Steph Always Get Her Way? Not On Your Life! Also: Lance Storm, Mick Foley, Goldberg, Steve Corino, Steve Blackman, Torrie Wilson.

March 2001: Triple-H & The Rock: 10 Reasons They Should Trust Each Other ... 10 Reasons They Should Not! Also: Scott Steiner, Chris Candido, Rob Van Dam, McMahon-ECW, Steven Richards, WCW factions.

May 2001: Do Anything You Want, Stone-Cold: We Can't Hate You. Also: Kronic, Rikishi, Steve Corino, Goldberg, Edge & Christian, Kane.

July 2001: Jerichoholics Beware! Serious Withdrawal Symptoms Are In Store! Also: Tajiri, Steph-Test, Undertaker, Mike Awesome, WCW Elite, Albert.

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PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

TOP 10

1. **CHRIS BENOIT**
   218, Edmonton, Alberta
   (–) No. 2 contender: WWF World title
2. **STEVE AUSTIN**
   252, Victoria, TX
   (1) WWF World champion
3. **KEIJI MUTO**
   245, Yamanashi, Japan
   (–) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
4. **CHRIS JERICHO**
   225, Winnipeg, Manitoba
   (7) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
5. **KANE**
   345, parts unknown
   (2) WWF Intercontinental champion
6. **KAZUYUKI FUJITA**
   253, Funabashi, Japan
   (3) IWGP heavyweight champion
7. **RHYNO**
   275, Detroit, MI
   (–) No. 4 contender: WWF World title
8. **MITSUHARU MISAWA**
   228, Ashikaga, Japan
   (10) GHC heavyweight champion
9. **KURT ANGLE**
   233, Pittsburgh, PA
   (8) No. 5 contender: WWF World title
10. **STEVE CORINO**
    219, Sea Isle City, NJ
    (9) NWA heavyweight champion

Kane

TAG TEAMS

1. **CHRIS BENOIT & CHRIS JERICHO**
   Combined weight: 443 pounds
   (1) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
2. **BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**
   Combined weight: 585 pounds
   (7) WWF World tag team champions
3. **SATOSHI KOJIMA & HIROYOSHI TENZAN**
   Combined weight: 493 pounds
   (2) IWGP International tag team champions
4. **CHRISTIAN & EDGE**
   Combined weight: 465 pounds
   (4) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title
5. **TAIYO KEA & JOHNNY SMITH**
   Combined weight: 470 pounds
   (5) All-Japan International tag team champions
6. **JEFF & MATT HARDY**
   Combined weight: 422 pounds
   (9) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title
7. **JUSTIN CREDIBLE & X-PAC**
   Combined weight: 448 pounds
   (–) No. 4 contenders: WWF World tag title
8. **MITSUHARU MISAWA & YOSHINARI OGAWA**
   Combined weight: 430 pounds
   (–) No. 1 contenders: GHC tag title
9. **CRASH & HARDCORE HOLLY**
   Combined weight: 474 pounds
   (8) No. 5 contenders: WWF World tag title
10. **CHARLIE & RUSS HAAS**
    Combined weight: 455 pounds
    (10) MCW Southern tag team champions

WCW

World Champion:
BOOKER T
(C) 250, Houston, TX

1. **SCOTT STEINER** *(1) 275, Detroit, MI*
2. **DALLAS PAGE** *(2) 260, Point Pleasant, NJ*
3. **LANCE STORM** *(9) 231, Calgary, Alberta*
4. **HUGH MORRUS** *(7) 310, Titusville, FL*
5. **MIKE AWESOME** *(10) 285, Tampa, FL*
6. **CHRIS KANYON** *(–) 245, Queens, NY*
7. **SHAWN STASIAK** *(6) 260, Oakville, Ontario*
8. **BILLY KIDMAN** *(–) 195, Allentown, PA*
9. **SHANE HELMS** *(4) 210, Raleigh, NC*
10. **CHAVO GUERRERO JR.** *(8) 210, El Paso, TX*

WWF

World Champion:
STEVE AUSTIN
(C) 252, Victoria, TX

1. **KANE** *(1) 345, parts unknown*
2. **CHRIS BENOIT** *(6) 218, Edmonton, Alberta*
3. **CHRIS JERICHO** *(4) 225, Winnipeg, Manitoba*
4. **RHYNO** *(8) 285, Detroit, MI*
5. **KURT ANGLE** *(5) 233, Pittsburgh, PA*
6. **THE UNDERTAKER** *(2) 328, Death Valley, CA*
7. **MATT HARDY** *(10) 211, Cameron, NC*
8. **TEST** *(–) 302, Toronto, Ontario*
9. **EDGE** *(–) 240, Toronto, Ontario*
10. **JEFF HARDY** *(–) 211, Cameron, NC*

NWA

NWA Champion:
STEVE CORINO
(C) 219, Sea Isle City, NJ

1. **ROBBIE ROYCE** *(1) 205, Toronto, Ontario*
2. **BIG DON BRODIE** *(2) 350, Jackson, MS*
3. **KEVIN NORTHCUTT** *(–) 348, Chalmette, LA*
4. **DR. LUTHER** *(3) 245, Calgary, Alberta*
5. **ICEMAN BUCK Q** *(5) 225, Tampa, FL*
6. **THE JET** *(7) 210, St. Paul, MN*
7. **MIKE SAMSON** *(9) 232, Pittsburgh, PA*
8. **RICKY MURDOCK** *(–) 261, Houston, TX*
9. **MAGNUM** *(–) 227, Wellston, OH*
10. **MIKE RAPADA** *(6) 231, Colorado Springs, CO*

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:
KAZUYUKI FUJITA
(C) 253, Funabashi, Japan

1. **YUJI NAGATA** *(1) 228, Tokyo, Japan*
2. **KEIJI MUTO** *(2) 245, Yamanashi, Japan*
3. **MASA CHONO** *(6) 235, Tokyo, Japan*
4. **MANABU NAKANISHI** *(3) 235, Tokyo, Japan*
5. **JUSHIN LIGER** *(8) 222, Hiroshima, Japan*
6. **SATOSHI KOJIMA** *(7) 223, Tokyo, Japan*
7. **TOSHIAKI KAWADA** *(–) 245, Ashikaga, Japan*
8. **TAIYO KEA** *(9) 235, Honolulu, HI*
9. **SCOTT NORTON** *(10) 360, Minneapolis, MN*
10. **TATSUMI FUJINAMI** *(–) 234, Oita, Japan*

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

For period ended June 22, 2001

CENTRAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Terry Alan; **1**—Tommy Green; **2**—Psychomaniac; **3**—Miss Diamond; **4**—Shane Lewis; **5**—Maddawg Mattingly; **6**—Bombay Warrior; **7**—Barry D; **8**—Tony Bradshaw; **9**—Col. Rage; **10**—Bob Russell.

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: Champion—Scoot Andrews; **1**—Mozart Fontaine; **2**—Cheetah Master; **3**—Simon Diamond; **4**—Low-Ki; **5**—Glen Osbourne; **6**—Mr. Ooh La La; **7**—Charlie Haas; **8**—Russ Haas; **9**—Ty Street; **10**—J.J. Johnston.

FRONTIER MARTIAL ARTS WRESTLING: Champion—Hayabusa; **1**—Kodo Fuyuki; **2**—Mr. Gannosuke; **3**—Tetsuo Kuroda; **4**—Kintaro Kanemura; **5**—Goemon; **6**—Manmoss Sasaki; **7**—Onryo; **8**—Hisakatsu Oya; **9**—Ricky Fuji; **10**—Chocoball Mukai.

GLOBAL PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Bull Schmitt; **1**—Derek Stone; **2**—Matt Murphy; **3**—Blade Boudreaux; **4**—Treach Phillips Jr.; **5**—Tim Warcloud; **6**—Dexter Hardaway; **7**—The Madd Chef; **8**—Wade Chism; **9**—Dru Jordan; **10**—Tojo Jr.

INDEPENDENT WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Roman; **1**—Hadrian; **2**—Kevin Knight; **3**—Biggie Biggs; **4**—The Patriot; **5**—Steve Corino; **6**—Josh Daniels; **7**—Damian Adams; **8**—Rob Eckos; **9**—Dr. Hurtz; **10**—Rapid Fire Maldonado.

MICHINOKU PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Great Sasuke; **1**—Tiger Mask; **2**—Dick Togo; **3**—Gedo; **4**—Jinsei Shinzaki; **5**—Gran Hamada; **6**—Chad Collyer; **7**—Pentagon; **8**—Fujine; **9**—Kazuya Yuwasa; **10**—Chinnen Hokkai.

NORTH AMERICAN WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Rolling Thunder; **1**—Bob Ozark; **2**—R.C. Luv'n; **3**—The Intimidator; **4**—The Kid; **5**—R.D. Luv'n; **6**—Roger Anderson; **7**—Shane Hooker; **8**—Frank Parker; **9**—Mr. Breeze; **10**—Johnny Smalls.

NWA NEW ENGLAND: Champion—Jason Rumble; **1**—Rick Fuller; **2**—Beau Douglas; **3**—Zak Mason; **4**—Apocalypse; **5**—Dan Bidondi; **6**—Steve Sabo; **7**—Chris Charisma; **8**—Criminally Insane; **9**—Dark Angel; **10**—Vinnie Capelli.

NWA PACIFIC NORTHWEST: Champion—Dr. Luther; **1**—Christopher Daniels; **2**—Billy Two Eagles; **3**—Michelle Starr; **4**—Leatherface; **5**—Juggernaut; **6**—Ladies Choice; **7**—Johnny Canuck; **8**—Jason the Terrible; **9**—Tommy Dreamer; **10**—Nova.

SOUTHERN CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Frank Parker; **1**—C.W. Anderson; **2**—Cham Pain; **3**—Otto Schwanz; **4**—Kross; **5**—Dewey Cheatum; **6**—Lazz; **7**—Scab; **8**—Cusick; **9**—Gotti; **10**—Shane Helms.

TOP ROPE CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Adam Knight; **1**—Vance Nevada; **2**—T.J. Bratt; **3**—Shane Madison; **4**—Brian Jewel; **5**—Bugsy Slugg; **6**—Zack Mercury; **7**—Rob Stardom; **8**—The Crimson Sheik; **9**—Johnny Malibu; **10**—Ricco Morrow.

WILD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING OUTLAWS: Champion—Sgt. Ed Wilson; **1**—Don Basher; **2**—Indiana Kidd Jr.; **3**—Itch Coma Weider; **4**—Cousin Otter; **5**—Rob Ramer; **6**—Guy Lombardo; **7**—Uncle Ernie; **8**—Jazz Hoyt; **9**—Dozer; **10**—Ron Preston.

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:
KEIJI MUTO
(–) 245, Yamanashi, Japan

1—GENICHIRO TENRYU
(C) 235, Tokyo, Japan
2—TOSHIAKI KAWADA
(2) 245, Ashikaga, Japan
3—HIROSHI HASE
(–) 225, Tokyo, Japan
4—HIROYOSHI TENZAN
(–) 270, Tokyo, Japan
5—TAIYO KEA
(1) 235, Honolulu, HI
6—SATOSHI KOJIMA
(–) 223, Tokyo, Japan
7—MIKE BARTON
(3) 263, Austin, TX
8—JOHNNY SMITH
(6) 235, Manchester, England
9—MASA FUCHI
(5) 225, Tokyo, Japan
10—STEVE WILLIAMS
(4) 265, Norman, OK

PRO WRESTLING NOAH

GHC Champion:
MITSUHARU MISAWA
(C) 228, Ashikaga, Japan

1—JUN AKIYAMA
(1) 225, Hiroshima, Japan
2—YOSHINARI OGAWA
(8) 202, Fichigi, Japan
3—AKIRA TAUE
(2) 265, Chichibu, Japan
4—VADER
(3) 450, Denver, CO
5—TAKAO OMORI
(5) 221, Tokyo, Japan
6—TAKESHI RIKIOH
(6) 286, Sakurai, Japan
7—TAKESHI MORISHIMA
(–) 281, Tokyo, Japan
8—2 COLD SCORPIO
(7) 222, Denver, CO
9—KENTARO SHIGA
(10) 206, Katsuta, Japan
10—YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA
(4) 270, Sapporo, Japan

EMLL

EMLL Champion:
UNIVERSO DOS MIL
(C) 240, Mexico City, Mexico

1—EL HIJO DEL SANTO
(1) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico
2—FELINO
(9) 165, Mexico City, Mexico
3—BLUE PANTHER
(–) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
4—APOLO DANTES
(4) 215, Guadalajara, Mexico
5—DR. WAGNER JR.
(3) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
6—NEGRO CASAS
(2) 175, Mexico City, Mexico
7—SCORPIO JR.
(6) 195, Nezahaulcoyoti, Mexico
8—EMILIO CHARLES JR.
(5) 222, Mexico City, Mexico
9—ATLANTIS
(7) 180, Guadalajara, Mexico
10—MR. NIEBLA
(8) 185, Cualtitlan, Mexico

AAA

AAA Champion:
LATIN LOVER
(C) 190, Monterrey, Mexico

1—HECTOR GARZA
(5) 220, Monterrey, Mexico
2—HEAVY METAL
(7) 180, Mexico City, Mexico
3—OCTAGON
(8) 180, Monterrey, Mexico
4—PIRATA MORGAN
(4) 221, Mexico City, Mexico
5—CIBERNETICO
(3) 235, Mexico City, Mexico
6—LA PARKA JR.
(1) 226, Torreon, Mexico
7—PERRO AGUAYO JR.
(6) 165, Zacatecas, Mexico
8—MASCARA SAGRADA
(–) 249, Veracruz, Mexico
9—EL TEXANO
(9) 225, Mexico City, Mexico
10—ABISMO NEGRO
(2) 210, Pachua, Mexico

Ratings Analysis

Every month, this column will tell fans how we go about rating over 200 wrestlers in 22 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important–and respected–ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans.

Huge month for "The Crippler" ... Yep, **Chris Benoit** is a top tier player in the WWF. Well, if our ratings this month are a good indication, he is.

Chris Benoit

It's not often that you see one man get the top spot in the Top 10 and share the top spot in the tag team rankings in the very same issue, especially when said man does not hold even one title on the day those ratings are compiled. But since there's only one major U.S.-based wrestling company in operation these days, you're bound to see some strange things in our ratings.

How did "The Canadian Crippler" do it? For starters, **Steve Austin** has been a very vulnerable heel champion in the WWF. He makes it abundantly clear to WWF Commissioner **William Regal** that he's not anxious to defend his title (despite his boasts that he's a fighting champion), not even against the most deserving challengers. Benoit had "The Bionic Redneck" beat twice on consecutive nights in late-May. Had **Vince McMahon** not interfered in *both* of those matches, he likely would have claimed his first WWF World championship.

Of course, you could make an argument that **Chris Jericho** had just as great a chance to dethrone "Stone-Cold" in the weeks leading up to King of the Ring. He, too, might have beaten Austin for the gold on several occasions had Vinnie Mac and others not interfered on "Stone-Cold's" behalf.

We simply believe that Benoit looked a little stronger and more dangerous in one-on-one competition against Austin and was thus the most dominant wrestler in the WWF for the one-month period covered by these rankings. And since Austin did not earn the number-one spot this month, we rewarded Benoit.

On the tag team front, **The Dudley Boyz** put an end to the championship reign of Benoit and Jericho just a few days before we compiled these rankings. They got a lot of help from Austin in doing so. It didn't really matter, though. Benoit and Y2J were clearly the most dominant tag team of the previous month. Even though both Chrises were focused on winning the World heavyweight title, they found time to defend the tag belts regularly, often against Austin and a partner of his choosing. "Stone-Cold" tried with Regal, he tried with **Rhyno**, and he tried with Mr. McMahon himself, and yet the Chrises always triumphed.

Benoit and Jericho also beat **Christian** and **Edge** and several other top WWF teams during their run. Belts or no belts, they were a strong number one in the tag team ranks this month.

Changes in WCW? Just last month, we wrote in this very column that we wouldn't be making changes in our WCW ratings until the new WCW was up and running. That has taken longer than most initially expected. And now WCW might first establish a strong presence on WWF TV, then later start running its own shows. So we've changed our minds and have adjusted the rankings a bit compared to last month, even though there obviously were no WCW cards held in May or June.

We've adjusted the rankings to reflect what we think the new WCW will look like when it finally gets up and running. We've left **Booker T** on top of the WCW rankings because he was World champion when the promotion was sold to WWFE. We are quite confident that Booker will be a major force in the new WCW (though it seems unlikely that he will still be recognized as World champ).

Hugh Morrus

Most of the others listed in the WCW top 10 are certain to be featured prominently in the new WCW as well. Of course **Lance Storm** and **Hugh Morrus** (ranked third and fourth, respectively) were the first two WCW stars to do run-ins on *Raw* at the behest of **Shane McMahon**. As for **Scott Steiner**, who's ranked right under Booker T, if he can recover from a foot injury, he's a decent bet to join the new WCW at some point, though probably not right away.

That's it for now! If you have any questions or comments regarding our ratings or what you see in this column, feel free to send them to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. □

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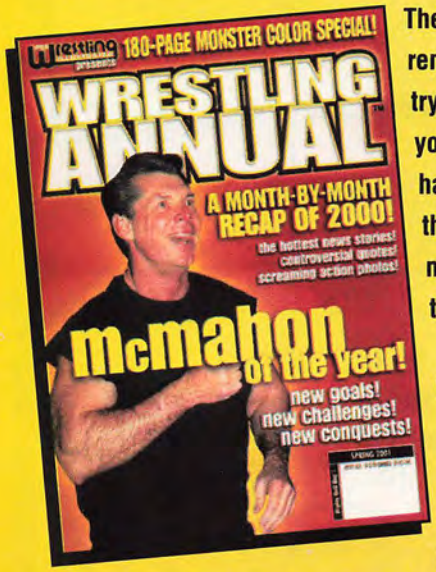

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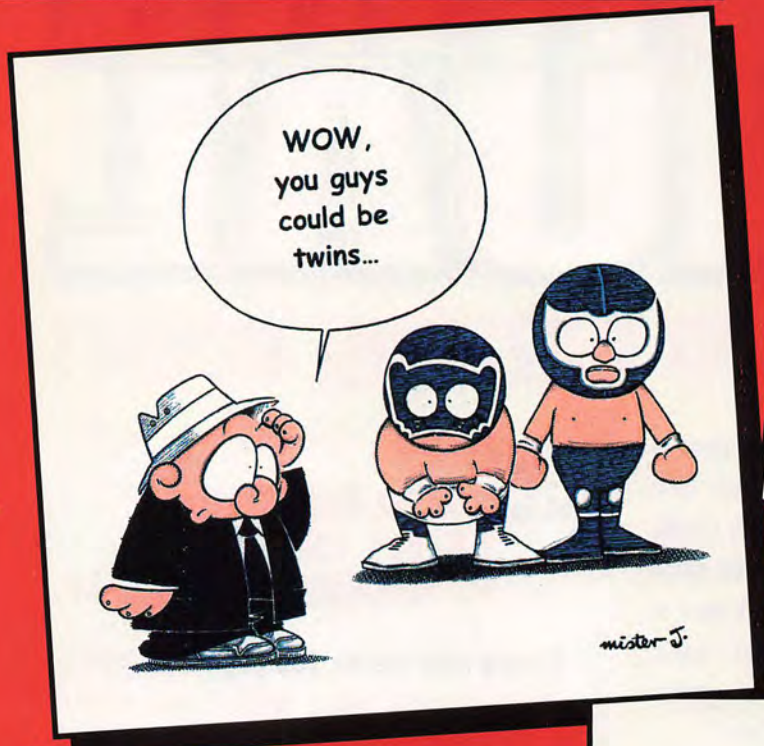
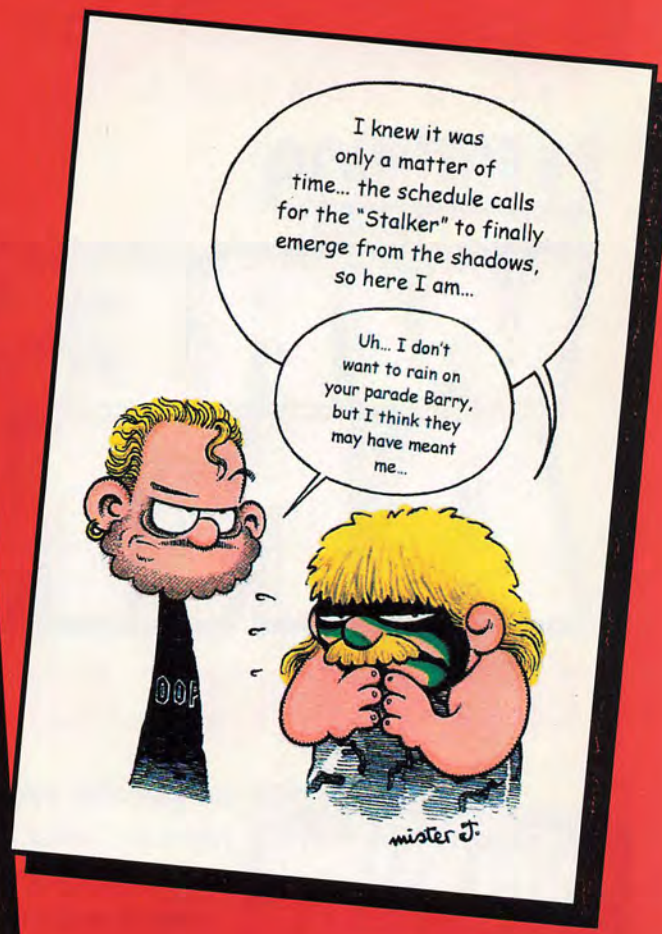
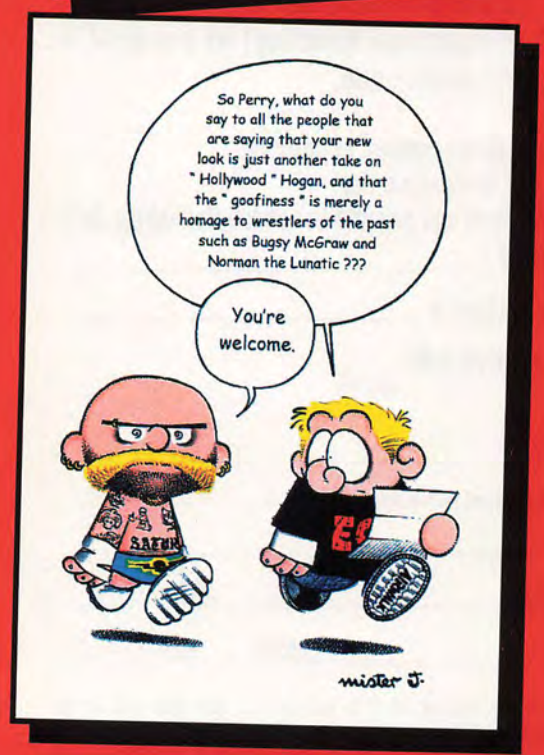
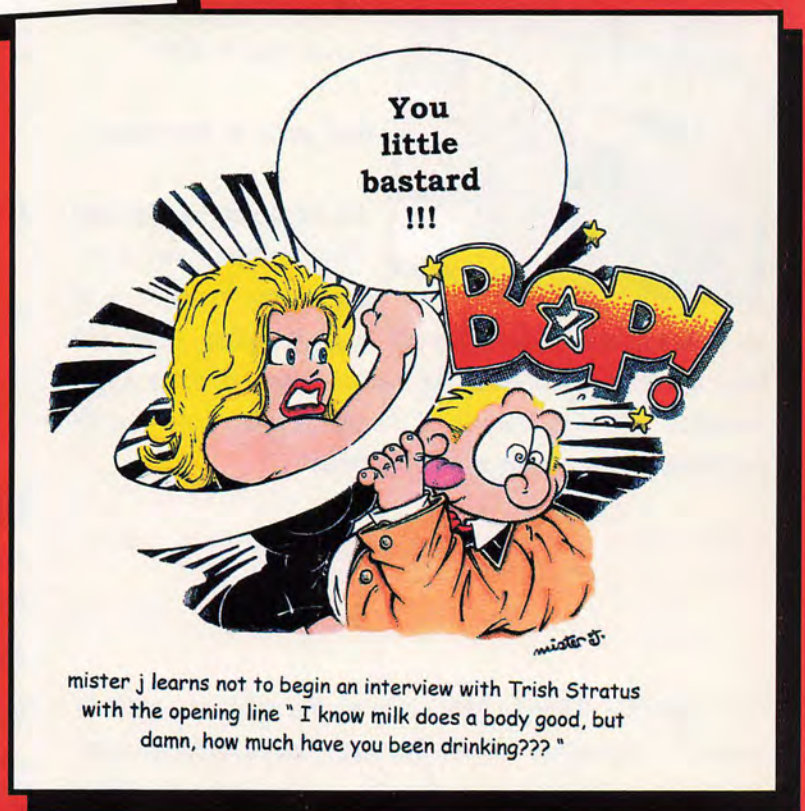
drawing BLOOD

By Jason Conlan




I knew it was only a matter of time... the schedule calls for the "Stalker" to finally emerge from the shadows, so here I am...
Uh... I don't want to rain on your parade Barry, but I think they may have meant me...
DOOF
mister J.


So Perry, what do you say to all the people that are saying that your new look is just another take on " Hollywood " Hogan, and that the " goofiness " is merely a homage to wrestlers of the past such as Bugsy McGraw and Norman the Lunatic ???
You're welcome.
mister J.



mister j learns not to begin an interview with Trish Stratus with the opening line " I know milk does a body good, but damn, how much have you been drinking??? "

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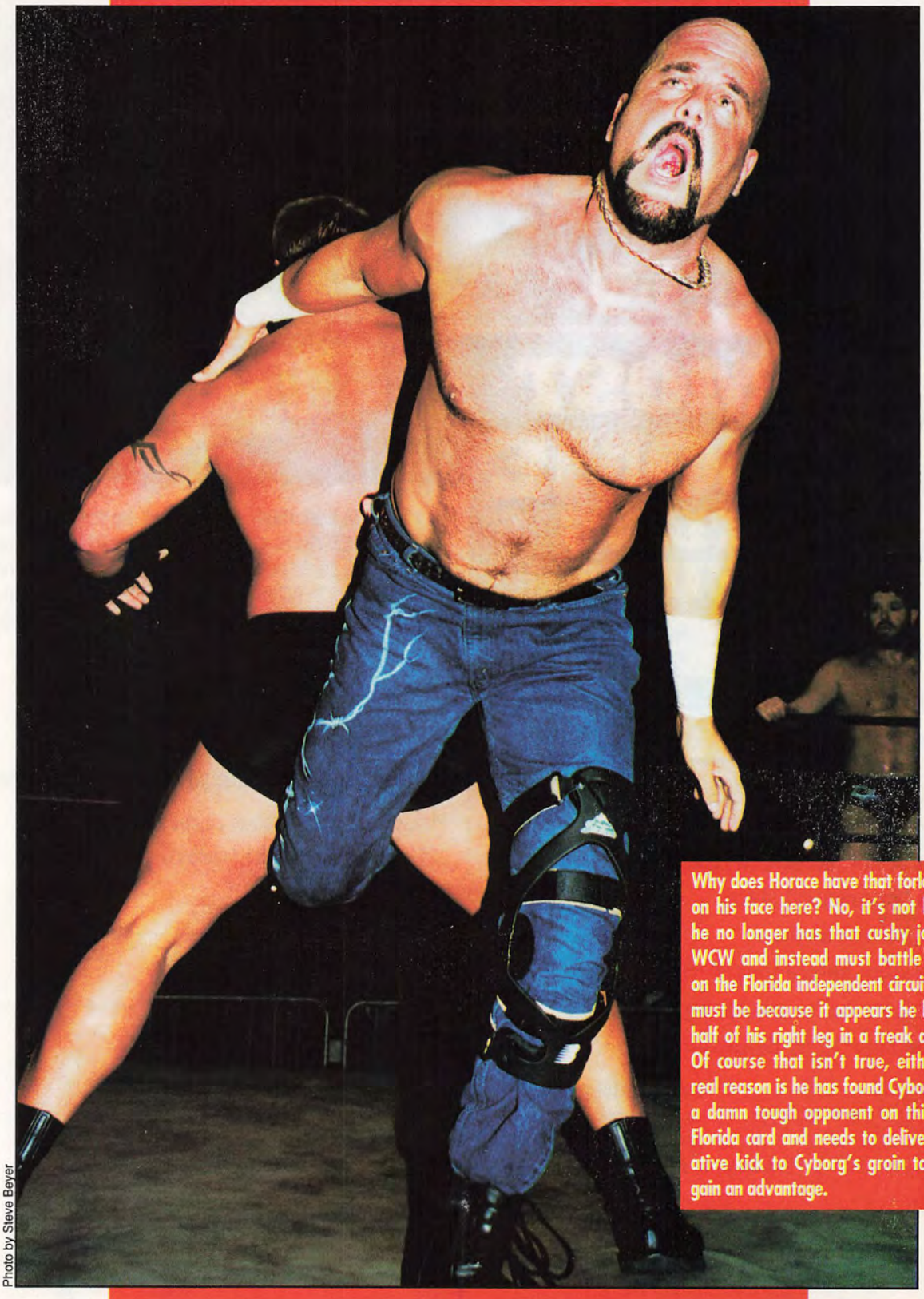

Photo by Steve Beyer

Why does Horace have that forlorn look on his face here? No, it's not because he no longer has that cushy job with WCW and instead must battle Cyborg on the Florida independent circuit. No, it must be because it appears he has lost half of his right leg in a freak accident! Of course that isn't true, either. The real reason is he has found Cyborg to be a damn tough opponent on this NWA Florida card and needs to deliver a creative kick to Cyborg's groin to try to gain an advantage.

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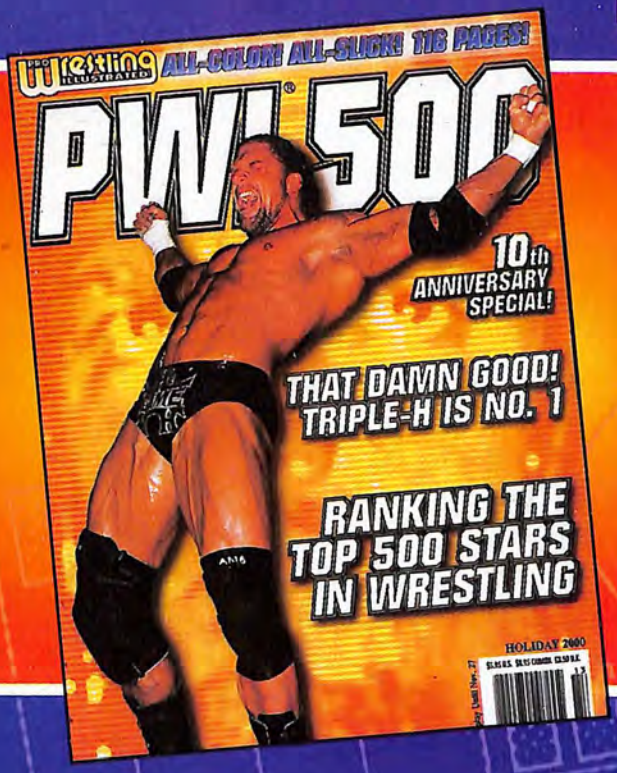
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